LILITH BEFORE EVE

And other plays

Jonathan Bowden

First Edition

Published May 2009

Printed in Great Britain

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Cover design and layout by Daniel Smalley

Cover painting ‘Jacket Locust’ by Jonathan Bowden ISBN 978-0-9557402-8-2

The Spinning Top Club

BM Refine

London

WC1N 3XX

www.jonathanbowden.co.uk

Grendel by Edward Miller (2004)

Frosted over a hoar’s face –

Transparent in blue;

It limns a circle of ice, in fury, dexterous to rage: Let one arm be shorn and hang from Hrothgar’s roof.

Dedicated to Dorothy Bowden (1931-1978)

Jonathan Bowden

Photo by Andrea Lioy

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LILITH BEFORE EVE

A play

“For before Eve was Lilith” – an old tale or its proverb, quoted by Rudyard Kipling

Dramatis Personae: These include Trog, a sadeian puppet of dubious origin; Punch, a ventriloquist (male); and Judy, his would-be lover. An unnamed female dancer performs throughout… she is stark naked.

Directions: All of this takes place in one cage or a sensory deprivation chamber. No props really figure during the piece.

The action remains or has to be considered to be the words. Each of the three characters sits around an oval table with a green baize cloth on it. Trog – the ventriloquist's puppet – wears a cover-all tribal mask around 'its' head, albeit with two faces at either end. This figurine comes across as de-humanised, gloved, set-aside and alone.

PART ONE

Trog: “Had she first surmised him on that bill-board or poster, and otherwise rearing up before those who have penetrated the mists? Its colours – intermingling with the texture of this livery –

were either ochre and scarlet… or possibly red and yellow, depending. Do you hear? Must we interpret this zeroing in on the facts in such a way, and may Kipling be wrong when he spoke of the ‘oldest story’, namely love? Smitten she most certainly was –

at least in terms of flesh’s shorn entity; as if it ricocheted like an amputation at the heart of identity. But what do I know of affirmative action – of introspection, adoration and desire? Am I just a doll (?), or, most evidently, a Canadian infraction against the circumstances of disease.”

Punch: “Describe yourself (!), O purposeless affidavit of manufactured wood.”

6

Trog: “You do it (instead) – when you’re the remit of my master within this Stygian bowl.”

Punch: “No you; I asked yonder form to release me from such an imponderable fate.”

Trog: “Cannot your mind detect the pointed ears behind our porcine mask? I will never be free for divers reasons, since I am inanimate: and I have come to resemble a ‘thing’ and not a person, thereby. Truly, I entertain the masque of a snake which knows nothing of its prey, and my eyes betray about their orbs the cruelty of these serpent folk.”

Punch: “You might fashion about your operation the necessity of the birch – lest I thrash you with a branch taken from the Tree of Life!”

Trog: “You mean Yggdrasill?”

Punch: “That’s right…”

Trog: “Why don’t you delineate the severity of my indifference (?), if only to fill up the cup of cruelty with lust. Do you ever doubt your right to exist?”

Punch: “Not I: and this is because personhood only delineates itself as an appetite to slaughter. Does the meanest spirit ever break out from the marrow of these bones?”

Trog: “My countenance afflicts conscience through the warrant of its disease, however.”

Punch: “Assuredly, I’m wasting my words with the onset of such pity. But – in your case – I shall adopt a charcoal sketch of the monstrous. For you happen to be a ventriloquist’s dummy which is awash with a texture of grey skin. Can your hands be 7

altogether furry and padded like those of a beast? Yet again, when I have occasion to think on’t, are they sleek and unburdened avec felt padding? Both of them happen to be small and miniaturised in character – and each one exhibits what Emily Dickinson called ‘a zero at the bone’. Avaunt thee! Your limbs or outer arms were conjoined with pins at the elbows; especially given such a wooden frame. Were you basically what Jakov Lind once described as a man of wood? Since your corse remains crippled, grotesque, three feet in size, cataleptic and angular in the distress of its distaff eddy. You must be aware of the fact that mind and body are connected at every level – pursuant to degeneration theory from the nineteenth century? Never mind the spirit (withal)… quod a physical distress betrays one’s moral notion of decay – when licit to the companionship of its nethermost orb. Beauty is the ethical purpose of love’s unction (in other words); while ugliness has to be a catalepsy in the spirit which portends defeat. The para-olympics then keeps its shape as a discharge for mountebanks. You alone, sirrah, can be the manufacturer of my negative side; a factor that thence betrays a silhouette which is cast out from its Victorian frame. But still, you continue to belabour or trump Quasimodo in a cracked mirror.”

Trog: “Move over, footling one… you have yet to describe the force of my awakening; if only to come up successfully from underground. Do these lips o’ bracken evince the distress of their leprosy?”

Punch: “Surely you’re referring to what’s called white leprosy?

A phenomenon or discharge otherwise noted in Conan Doyle’s nomenclature via The Blanched Soldier…”

Trog: “Thou hast said it, my masterful dot! Particularly if we are to reckon in the facticity of Mel Gibson’s The Passion of the Christ… Let’s continue to delineate my pasture forevermore; at once choosing a beheading over its entrapment in the oak. Might 8

the fastness of its age be indicated by the number of rings around the trunk?”

Punch: “Quite so, my devil doll: in that the sap in your veins illuminates the blood of victims as yet unborn. Yet why don’t I furnish your alphabetical soup with more letters?”

PART TWO

Punch continues…: “I’m afraid that your visage incarnates a stick-insect most rare; if only to prop up the idea of a delinquent puppeteering. You have to be aware that Thunderbirds are not necessarily FAB! Similarly, your eyes swivel and radiate in their sockets – thereby connecting them to a sluice device which runs parallel to the eye. Does it eventually bore its way back into the recesses of a papier-mâché skull? But, in such circumstances, where is the room for any accommodated brain? Truly, you were small, midget-like, occasionally folded up on your master’s lap, double or triple-jointed, as well as wearing a purple dress-suit, brown shoes, an orange dress-shirt and bow-tie. Wasn’t it the exemplification of a forgotten distaste? Also, your flesh tint illustrates the grey of its rubbery modelling – i.e., one that’s been held up in the doll’s hospice or comes replete with its tension/sheen. Can you recall the Doll’s Hospital in Reading, west Berkshire? Wherein a hundred corpses or so – all of them children’s handy-meats – lay in the upstairs window of a forgotten lair… despite being higgledy-piggledy. – What with their arms, limbs and faces coming to be intertwined in the grip of death… rather like so many diverse bodies in a charnel pit!

May we ever forget your pointed ears and bright red, voluminous lips or nails (?) when painted after a clown’s fashion. After all, isn’t the world of carnival, circus, street theatre, improvisation, action art, vaudeville, magic, music hall, wrestling, the side-show barker’s cry and a display of freaks… not sinister? Doesn’t it partake of the malevolent; if only residually or in a matter of fact way? Could it relate to a mediaeval feast of fools or even the dithyramb of one’s anatomy lesson? Do the worlds of Galen, Vesalius and Professor Gunter von Hagens collide herein (?); 9

particularly over an exhibition of flayed corpses. – At least if we concern ourselves with a cybernaut’s plastinates, by dint or virtue of original types of entertainment. Might this intone a new or amoral Kolyma (a soviet concentration camp); and what is the point of being alive if a puppet cannot enjoy Pasolini’s Salo, in black-and-white, with the images reversed out?”

PART THREE

Judy: “I first spied him in a tabernacle of miracles – when next to the board which advertised his ventriloquist’s show. Was it outside the Bellairs Playhouse in Guildford, Surrey? Anyway, I felt compulsively drawn to his example – rather like the moth that is animated by the flame within which it will be consumed.

Did I circle for awhile – somewhat circumspectly – around the doors and payment booths of this theatre? Had I yet to recognise the steam turbine of my love?”

Punch: “You were in love… or swooning in ecstasy like a deluded swan!”

Judy: “Yes, yes, my ready darling… with you.”

Trog (the puppet, who was sitting nearby throughout this ordeal, or on his master’s lap): “Indeed, she knew the reality of adoration

– a percentage which just flexes its muscles at the touch of Aphrodite’s gossamer lips. All appears to be a rogue integer of meat; at once replete with a butterfly or Papillon that attaches itself to the calf-side of one of Francis Bacon’s triptychs. Are we altogether in an abattoir of the senses; especially given those erotic and morbid tensions in Flemish art concerning the waxing or waning of the Middle ages?”

Punch: “Or we might mention the Renaissance’s onset…

whereby the calm onset of the classic world comes back to de-Christianise the West.”

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Trog: “Quite so. All truth begins and ends with the Oresteia by Aeschylus. Do you detect a debt of relinquishment over and above a rampart of the psyche… one that will be paid later on by Villon, Donne, Rimbaud and Verlaine? Moreover – even Lord Alfred Douglas’ translation of Wilde’s

Salome from the French pertains to this. May it deal with beheading, dance, a Bacchanalian extravaganza and phantasies of fellatio a la Richard Strauss' opera…? In any event, you definitely love each other without kindred resource. Does one detect an evanescent sprout, thereby?"

Judy: "Might it be true, Punch, do you love your Judy… yet?"

Punch: "But where is the Policeman?"

Trog: "Or those multiple beatings – when handed out by clubs and sticks on every side – and much beloved of children down the ages. Also, whenever will we be able to find those red-and-yellow awnings down on Brighton's sands – themselves replete to a puppeteering of violence? And this was never mind the gibbet upon which Punch is to be hanged later on; the latter needs to be manufactured from good, clean wood."

Judy: "Oh, my darling pet, you will never be executed. I won't permit it!"

Trog: "Not allow, the lady says… perhaps we shall axe you instead, dearie; and what about Toby the dog?"

PART FOUR

Judy: “Have I seen him before within the semblance of such a blue light; a scenario that’s merely held fast at the centre of the stage and imprisoned by a yellow beam? Nothing seems to constrain the two of them – whether parent or off-spring – as they sit at the heart of an expectant pit or inside a folly of moon-beams.”

11

Trog: “Your love proves to be immediately livid, chaste, expectant and unpanelled in its purple. Did you think it could remain hidden when you commandeered my master’s dressing-room?”

Judy: “I essentially entertained it on the off-chance – albeit with a shyness which came bred in the bone or proved to be uncertain of its witness.”

Trog: “Surely you remain undecided over its role in backgammon?”

Judy: “No, assuredly; yet the escape into this star’s boudoir lay before me… What with its mirror – when sequined to a rendezvous or its fluster – and it comes surrounded by those yellow lights that habituate one to grease-paint… even in a vaudeville act such as this. A few postcards transfix the glass above our gaze, and they are cast off to the side but always seem to be parented in their derangement. Do you comprehend it now?”

Trog: “Love is a two-way acrobatics within infinity; nor can we square off our relief before the semblance of any available wood.

It reinterprets a trampoline upon which one twists and turns – so as to somersault beyond the witness of torture. Are you aware that love is a disease, or a hatred of surcease which runs on its voltaic energy? Like any other malady, it strikes down those who are fit to build a temple to themselves in their garden.”

Punch: “You mean a folly…?”

Trog: “Possibly – for the shores of Eve’s off-spring, when heaving on the beach, were replete with sharks! They basked in the sunlight.”

PART FIVE

Judy: “But let’s speak more about the representation of my love!

Since I am afraid to see a skeleton towering over a throne of ebon marble and rising under arc-lamps in a hidden tomb. Was it really clothed in the absence of flesh; together with its unforgiven brown-bones before the velvet of its corse? By any similar interlude, did the joints crack or splay (?); that is, does one move o’er and against another in terms of an armature’s rest?

Even though its great, gaping, skeletal mouth seems to open and close upon a tribute of affection…”

Punch: “You’ve been reading those novellas from Mills & Boon again!”

Trog: “Granted: it has to be a peculiar adventure into the mastery of Love… once more and unto this breech. Yet isn’t romantic literature just a species of emotional pornography for women?

By any other consideration, this pin-hole camera – when replete with imagery upon a plate – has found its compartments ruptured from without. The girl loves you, confess it, Punch! Are you (in contravention) going to brandish your baton and beat her? I think not! Why don’t you wise up to such a fracture o’ arrested fortune? Mayhap, you think her illustration is too unsettled –

particularly if drawn from a literature of the distaff side? Why then, don’t you sign off against the circumstances of a scarlet coverlet?”

Punch: “Wasn’t a blood red colour thrown up in so many spots against an abandoned screen? Shouldn’t it encode an abstract expressionist painting by Jackson Pollack?”

Trog: “Abundantly so: this comes into being without the recesses of so much mutilation or talent. Anyway, I prefer to think of it as a rhinoceros creature a la Ionescu’s example; and it’s tied to a post of unbridled onyx.

Has this indent of universal agency been tortured; or otherwise ripped to shreds before the acreage of 13

time? Do you hear my clarion call to its witness, thereafter?

Since ‘it’ bears upon its rubbery hide – or juniper skin – the mark of the rack, stone or branding-iron. All of these sightings are buffeted forth abreast of a bedizened jewel… May this be a great constellation of fire (?); the former merely flaring away in its tournament of Greek Flame and only stopping short of declaring itself to be a fabled comet. Did the latter fail to plunge down to the sodden earth; thereby causing a maximum impact upon the loam? Hear me! Because the ground steams and bubbles with the miasma of its course; or after the evidentialism of Professor Challenger in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s The Lost World.”

Punch: “Yet let us look for indications of meaning or affliction, my dear boy/puppet. Is this former head – when screwed on with a bolt – little more than Grey like a turkey-cock and indicative of a double-joint at the chin, thereby? Might it rescue a manikin of our affinity… particularly when it’s been severed at the neck?

Subscribe a purpose to us at last – lest you should surrender to approximation or misstatement. Don’t attempt to rewrite Derrida’s Prisms within a theatre of the macabre, I beg you…”

Trog: “You have forgotten to insult my bravery before the truth!

Thus, I refuse to lay siege to linguistic development; I just indicate the celerity of blood (instead) whilst brandishing a celery stalk as I do so! Can it also be the wand or batten – then being commandeered by a master of ceremonies – that enables us to go on towards Celine’s ‘End of the Night’? Am I my own ring-master… no matter how resultantly?”

+

“Anyway, the rhinoceros creature was soon freed from bondage; if only to sprout wings and plunge deep into the heart of a flaming jewel.”

Judy: “Could he have been pursuing the magician who had been tormenting him?”

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Punch: “Necessarily so: in that he swoops, riffs, ramps and runs overhead – albeit now circling down on a bearded figure who wears a dark cap and cape.”

Trog: “Does he flee – this candidate for Xanadu – rather like Sax Rohmer’s Fu Manchu and with an oriental beard twisted to the fate of its cruelty? All of it necessarily takes place within a manga of one’s identity…”

Judy: “Yet our love shines out beyond all other such tendencies.

Have you really had a chance to spy on Ligeti’s Dance of Death?

May we even be adult enough to face the expectancy of our defeat? For remember… let us never fail to enjoy a Brief Encounter moment with Trevor Howard through a failure to breathe or grieve – nary mind breed.”

Punch: “Didn’t Friedrich Nietzsche insist on the importance of genetics in his notebooks – The Will to Power?”

Judy: “Assuredly, dearest sprite, but I must clasp you in my open arms… devoted one. Forget your tabernacle of wood or emptiness – you speak the truth through Trog! Let us elope from your act before the reality of this truth drug wears off. Nor need we essay anything other than the management of dwarves.”

Trog: “I am a dwarf!”

Punch: “Please prevent us from becoming bogged down with

‘political correctness’ on behalf of the little people (herein)!”

Judy: “But they’ll never put us on at the Institute for Contemporary Arts now.”

Punch: “Who cares? Yet – wait a moment – won’t we be able to enter those portals which once shared a space with the Chapmans’ dolls?”

15

Judy: “You mean those mock-paedophile exhibits – at once fist-to-fist – or close by north west?”

Punch: “That’s right! It happens to be a million miles away from Anthony Gormley’s the Angel of the North.”

Trog: “You mean the one that has its arms open as a gesture of protection or an absence of pride? Do you recognise such a witness statement as this if it shares only the necessity of a cracked mirror?”

Punch: “Are there divers examples of green-glass frames behind us (?); at least in terms of our costume or vestibule. See here –

delinquent one – what of your human rights?”

Trog: “You utter a blasphemy, master. I refuse mortal status –

since I am inhuman. Consider me to be part of an invisible group which is called the inhumanists. Whilst necessarily, I reject the religion of tolerance or inclusion. Can I demand that dwarf throwing be regarded as an inalienable part of a midget’s freedoms? Stand up for the small or the reduced in stature, thereby. Runts of the world unite… you have nothing to lose but your hands and feet! For us, over four feet and two inches has to be considered as an exercise in body fascism! Do you recognise the inner logic of Leni Riefenstahl’s or Tamara de Lempicka’s aesthetics? I retain a pride in my defaced puppetry – the uglier still; the more fascinating the outcome. Do you agree? Our creed has to be nought but the Procrustean bed… Long live a decrepit Pinocchio! Long subsist this pregnant swarm! It’s a question of Quasimodo not Esmeralda! Let’s champion dwarfdom! Hail death! Hail…”

PART SIX

Judy: “But don’t you love me, Punch, my sweet?”

Trog: “Go on… kiss her, you fool!”

16

Punch: “I can’t understand the conduct of any such beginnings.

Might it relate to the prospects for an opera which Sir Harrison Birtwhistle undertook and that was called Punch & Judy? An uncertain prologue swirled around this work; it contained Punch, Judy and the baby…”

Trog: “Where is this toddler or babbler of innocence?”

Punch: “I know not. Yet any intrigue of mine has to fall before these fates; especially when it relates to the target of its suspicion. I refuse to exhibit such a nullity – even within ventriloquism – and in terms of a deluded stick-man, albeit one that’s tightened at the waist. Does this embody one of those figurines in an artist’s studio – whether single, double or triple-jointed at its vertices? For a sculpture like this was a macquette of no significance… at once now trembling or intruding in the dust (a la William Faulkner), irrespective of being neuter or strangely androgynous. Are we also under the parabola of Angela Carter here? But likewise, do those incredible desire machines of Doctor Hoffmann ripen or find a way to leap between dimensions? Is this essentially after the fashion of H.P.

Lovecraft’s familiar, Brown Jenkin? After all, at the centre of a statue’s efficacy lies a misstatement. It has nothing more than a soul of clay – merely look at the meat attendant upon the witness of Frink, Paolozzi or Dobson, for instance! Nonetheless, do you recall that scene of transformation which was otherwise mired in the mud of Rosamund Lehmann’s novel, The Ballad and the Source (withal)? Wherein a mad woman – a Mrs. Rochester manqué – felt these stones to be enclosing real

bodies. They were replete with a sense of plaster. Does her aorta beat to this entreaty of magnificence; or be it congealed within a second skin (sic)?”

Judy: “I beg you to differ from this punishment… since hasn’t the skeleton stood up within such subdued light; the former being shot through over an electric blue’s intention. Again, a mysterious semblance to actuality comes upon us; wherein 17

wolves howl their deliverance outside this latitude of stones. Do you realise that our chieftain rises above us – even when naked and shorn over the remit of so much bone? But still, a dead-man like this moves in an ungainly fashion towards its nemesis…

broad-sword in hand. Is this past Odin oblivious to the fact that various boxes of jewels counteract a sombre splendour…

irrespective of any sepulchral architecture? May our procession indicate, in turn, the grandiloquent sets of so many silent films…

such as those of Cecil B. DeMille?”

Trog: “I grant you the locution of an amputation – no matter how apposite its loss. Nevertheless, I prefer my stock of imagery to that which you might choose to locate in the minds of men. Do you remember the radio slogan from one of Orson Welles’

tourneys (?); at least as regards the serial vested in Keneth Robeson’s Shadow. He happened to be a vigilante – replete with gun-fire – from out of a signature tune in the nineteen thirties. Its motto was: who knows what evil lurks in the minds of men?”

Punch: “I recall it well – when pursuant to a lost metaphor of causation.”

Trog: “Good!”

Punch: “But may it spoil our purpose yet (?) – because we are really a post-modern version of Punch and Judy. This proves to be after the example of a Gothic misadventure… as comes to be contained in the circumstances of

M.R. James' ghost stories – no matter how hieratic in form! Whereupon the violence of the sea-side (or the rough-and-tumble of Grand Guignol) fillets itself before a curtain's closure. A blind or gingham screen (this) which cascades to the floor in order to obviate meaning…"

Trog: "No sir, Mr. Punch!"

Punch: "Take that – you wooden coin-sharp!"

18

Trog: "No, caitiff!"

Punch: "Oaf!"

Trog: "Poltroon!"

Punch: "Aaaah! Ooooh!"

Trog: "Delinquent tyke!"

Punch: "You have it!"

Trog: "Oh-ah!"

Punch: "Yabooo!"

Trog: "Mix it up, smelly!"

Punch: "In the immortal words of Edmund, God stand up for bastards!"

Trog: "Death is the portion of madmen…"

Punch: "Tickety boo! Boohoo!"

Trog: "Can it: Willie the weeper!"

Punch: "Fish-eater."

Trog: “Rag, tag and bob-tail too.”

Punch: “Culpable spastic!”

Trog: “BBC newsreader.”

Punch: “Liberal.”

19

Trog: “Hog-bound furrier.”

Punch: “Dish-washer.”

Trog: “Get a dose of this… drob-head.”

Punch: “Eat claw, smiley.”

Trog: “Thwack… whack… take that!”

Punch: “What about this?”

(Note: They continue to exchange blows with their hands and sticks – rather like traditional vaudeville turns or ‘funny men’.

Nor is this to mention the example of Punch & Judy knocking hell’s bells out of each other down on Blackpool’s sea-front…

necessarily.)

PART SEVEN

Judy: “But what of the severance of our untold Love?”

Trog: “By whichever means do you seek to ensnare me between Scylla and Charybdis… ol’ duck?”

Punch: “Pardon? My prep school didn’t actually run to ancient greek.”

Judy: “Do not despair, sweetheart. Nothing can be lost in translation; at least in terms of one affordable ‘park & ride’ rather than the next. For – to use your imagery – the cannibalism of desire has to be faced up to before a plate-load of meat. Do you wish to digress from the essential problem that lies before us?

Since the skeleton had risen from its dais or it basically came to be ripped over its portion of a cleft palette, and ‘it’ stared down into a tunnel of darkness. May the wolf-pack howl away outside; and do tapers of fire then flicker upon these subdued stones? Are 20

they not firmly hidden in niches; therein to reveal the diameter of their attested light?”

Punch: “But what of the rhinoceros creature – especially when it’s cast out by virtue of a multiplicity of bone?!”

Judy: “That’s right, beloved! Surely we are both adult enough to bear witness to the nature of our passion? Yet this magical dragon – within the oft semblance of a dream – soared away or far ahead, and into those ranges of purple. Did he intend to bring down his former tormentor (?); now reduced to microscopic size within the flames of a many-sided jewel. I swear to you that everything of which I speak is fact.”

Trog: “None of it bears false witness in the land of Nod?”

Judy: “Most assuredly… embrace me now, enraptured one. It is time to go beyond emotional foreplay and find solace in a touch most sure.” (She

reaches out her hand).

Punch: “Don’t plague the resources of sideways-on meat! Cast me adrift, cut me off… forthwith. But, by anything the art of the mannequin holds sacred, let me go! Forget to touch me – release the balustrades! Please, I beseech you, forgo coming near.”

Trog (with a strange air about the puppet): “Ventriloquism begins in the stomach or innermost organs. It originates from Germany, you know? Yet the sound of words – when issuing from these silent lips – ultimately comes from the belly. It basically refers, in Teutonic diction, to throwing the voice from one’s innards.”

PART EIGHT

Judy (when utilised, somewhat delicately, as a voice-over):

“There now began one of the most peculiar romances that the world has ever spied. For I followed the two of them (Punch and 21

Trog) around the cosmos – i.e., from country to country and state to state. Does one hear the patter of tiny feet made of wood?

Hark! Sometimes I sat out in front; at once salient to a blue tick-off; and at other moments I existed over in the wings – scared to red. While, on different occasions, I took up a distant vantage-point… as was seen or observed from the colour yellow. Maybe it incarnated some deep-seated sandstone? Here are a few pointers to their stage act or performance, by way of illustration…”

Punch: “Do tread lightly…”

Trog: “Because you step on my corns?”

Punch: “No, jokes –.”

Trog: “But didn’t Aristophanes achieve everything in this line?”

Punch: “Not quite.”

Trog: “He can’t succeed in hanging the audience.”

Punch: “Will you do that?”

Trog: “I’ve brought the rope from Jewsons.”

Punch: “It’s tough, multiple-coiled and blue.”

Trog: “Are you being anti-semitic?”

Punch: “Let it be Travis Perkins then – the colour remains unaltered.”

Trog: “Yet how can you string them up?”

Punch: “Won’t they go home and do it for us?”

22

Trog: “Why, having seen me first, don’t they want to?”

Punch: “It’s a good job we’ve gone over to natural gas these days.”

Trog: “Everything in this show becomes nitrous oxide!”

Punch: “Were we doing a Royal Variety performance?”

Trog: “All that we lack is royalty and a sense of variety.”

Punch: “Do you remember any good mother-in-law jokes?”

Trog: “No.”

Punch: “Well… that’s killed this part of the Mansion House speech.”

Trog: “I don’t write the material.”

Punch: “Would anyone else?”

Trog: “Pah!”

Punch: “I always told Doctor Barnardo’s that I wanted to be a comedian.”

Trog: “I know, and they’re not laughing now… et cetera.”

PART NINE

(Directorial interlude… this part was possibly narrated by Judy).

A beautiful and naked blonde stands in some transfixed blue light. She happens to be an exotic dancer or artiste of repute. Her presence here signals a metaphor for the previous action – given that the other three characters find themselves caught around a table. Can it be otherwise spare? Yet, on a secondary calculus, she may not be entirely nude – if the girl wears gauntlets and 23

high-heeled boots. These have tasselled extremities or limits of probity around them. There also subsisted the whirl of metal or studded belts… all of which exist betwixt her midriff and catch.

Her breasts and buttocks were exposed, but she carries in either gloved hand a long lasso. It betokens azure in both tint and finality. Whereas her big hair is peroxided down to a pitch of blondeness; the former extending halfway down her back.

Suddenly, she commences to dance and throws up her gauntleted arms – plus the hemp… thereby revealing her bosoms.

Momentarily, the dancer's hands are splayed and behind her shoulders; or was there a glaucous tattoo marked LOVE on one of her flanks? Possibly it may have been the right one – while seen under those arc-lamps of an apprised marine. Now then, is she actually dancing up and down in her cowboy boots replete with spurs; when taken together avec those tassels aslant each leg and mushrooming out, or striking a collective impermanence (thereby)? Up and down she bounces on the lit boards – what with the neck of a cable circling beneath her: in relation to which a violet silhouette turns on the floor. Might it re-do or interpret an expressionist wood-cut? On and on she bounds – whilst just see-sawing like an Olympic trampoline: with her leg muscles pulsating and the minx's massive hair streaming in front of her…

None of this (though) conceals the fact that her bubs are out and refulgent.

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For Rider Haggard’s SHE! has had occasion to cavort to Ligeti’s Danse Macabre; an atonal threnody if ever there was one!

PART TEN

The three characters in our drama – Punch, Trog and Judy – find themselves sat around a table with a sherry glass on it. Only one exercise in Irish crystal exists between them.

Judy: “Can’t we ever go anywhere without Trog?”

24

Trog: “Oh, dear me now, Punch never goes out without moi, do you?”

Punch: “Nevermore and a day (my familiar) or a bunch of Sundays. We are inseparable!”

Judy: “Listen to the impressions of a dream I’ve just had! I came across you, Punch – albeit with a delirious clown-face against a background of white. Your nose had to be made up using a brilliant red disc, or was it actually an extended conic section and ballast… after the fashion of Pinocchio? Do you revisit this semblance or its actuality? Again, Trog exists before you and out of all favours of moon-time; it comes to be independent of your grip – no longer being a ventriloquist’s dummy, you see. It stands abreast of your mournful aspect and gesticulates (now) in the manner of a silent film… somewhat like The Cabinet of Doctor Caligari. In any event, this masked denizen finally unfixes yonder nose; thereby taking off the red-nosed reindeer’s deceit. Only to offer – what? Why, Trog just turns away from our spot-light, rather nonchalantly, or in relation to some pattern of disgust. But what I can’t forget has to be the expression of depletion, exhaustion, false contempt or suicidal aloneness which flits across yon features. Your eye also appears to be distended –

at once glassy, fearful, spectral, undefeated and yet alone. Might we otherwise tell it to an invisible Jackanory? Moreover, you remain slumped down in an ergonomic chair – replete with a salient metal-rim – as I approach from the stage’s back. A distant fog seems to clog up the landscape. Whatever may it really amount to? Anyway, let us call it the

distillate of some dry-ice particles… themselves moving across one's range of vision, if only to cede once or twice towards a purpose or its entreaty. This configuration (likewise) blurs a remit within one's identity. I continue to be dressed in black – although by making use of tight-fitting garments of yore. Do I delineate a 'nineties girl about town with a closely-woven skirt above the knee – and some calf-high boots? Shall this be an exercise in a moral 25

boulevard? I light a cigarette with a lighter manoeuvred out of my bag expressly for this… intentionally so. Yet still Trog leers abundantly over my love – with this puppet's jaws (underneath the mask) drawn up next to your neck; and almost vampiric in its pose or response. You look deflated – yet continue to hold your ground steadfastly, irrespective of the clown make-up smeared all over your face. Can this embody a beacon in order to delineate the Russian state circus (?); a culture where such a popular tournament is regarded as a genuine art-form. Or, percussively and as an alternative, mighten the latter be received as a tributary of blood rushing to its source… or milking the whole like so much lip-stick smeared around a trap. But – all of a piece – Trog's mouth-organ backs off when occasioning a rasp, or the signification of a banshee calling for her prey. Won't this imbroglio be grasped as a confirmation of the Scots-Irish mist?"

Trog: "Do you have a proposal to pop (?); maybe even before the aisle of our entombment."

Judy: "You surmise correctly, my papier-mâché head. Are we to wait until Cerberus' jaws close upon us? Let us refuse to slaver at the bit with our genitalia out, but mutually agree to come to a decision aslant these fates."

Punch: "A factor which is… irrespective of any damage occasioned by these Norns?"

Judy: "I shall instruct you. Our respective duties must lie in the direction of a matrimonial union or its cross."

Trog: "Cannot you tell that he is tremulous ahead of such a grid-iron?"

Judy: “Silence remains golden for those who fail to communicate properly, you know. But let me give you some alms towards the plenitude of a fist. For we love each other. The only options 26

which now confront us are matrimony or a mutual suicide pact.

Do you want it to be said that nought but a ventriloquist’s dummy survives us? Surely, my sweet, we must resist the allure of a wiccan doll?”

Trog: “Refrain from insulting me, wench! The spent nature of your intrigue is merely the vivisection of a great ape laid out in front of us. Are you aware whether famous biologists, like Professor Richard Dawkins, wish to extend the notion of human rights to the higher primates? No (?); why then lean upon the integer of a falling star… since the virulence of Titus Andronicus will only be enacted by mannequins who are accustomed to their task. As the party tormentor O’Brien tells Winston Smith in George Orwell’s Nineteen Eighty-four, do you die when you cut your finger-nails?”

Punch: “Touche, little one… Truly, you happen to be a homunculus of the forgotten orb. Especially when such a characteristic sphere can only be Odin’s eye-ball – the latter jettisoned forwards while he was crucified on the Tree of Life!”

Trog: “Never mind all that… For I represent his two ravens when combined on your left-side; with either of them hanging from a cliff – plus one of your arms halfway up my back: only to work it up and down like a lottery scratch-card.”

Judy (with some exasperation): “I have had enough of this game of charades. Let us cut to the chase – my dearest friends of absence. Because my head lies to one side of yon, albeit with my eyes fixed on a dream that exists far and wide. Is it just given over to the gossamer twang of a hairy spider, who moves convulsively along the side of its web in order to devour his prey? Can ‘love’ be seen as the scavenging of abundant succour?

Does the mate of the black widow – after impregnating her – try to get away by scurrying along the branch to safety? Do you recall him from those

nature programmes on public service broadcasting? He must be the little brown one. May he reach the 27

paradise of absolution – no way?! She – over a hundred times his size – reaches out languorously in order to draw him up to her thorax with an arachnid's ligature… Crunch! After the fashion of one of J.G. Ballard's automobile crashes, he is consumed. A blank bill of fayre – of nothingness – then fills this screen!"

Trog: "Thou speakest the truth, sister; or should that be spent carrion of our hate? Doest one reminisce about those paintings which mimic the existentialism of the nineteen fifties (?), and they were executed with the graphic talent of Buffet. Wherein an unholy angst penetrates the surface of your visage, only then to retreat into the three-dimensionality of a nightmare."

Judy: "I know what you mean for the following reason –

modernist painting is not my poison."

Trog: "Yet I insist on declaiming, fair one, that all female vampires are the descendants of Lilith!"

PART ELEVEN

Punch: “You speak of the existence of a dream… most untidily.”

Judy: “Assuredly – yet when confronted with the facts I forget their import.”

Punch: “Allow me to vouchsafe it for you! Let me look across into the justifications of your mind… Can it be considered to be a confrontation with Brute Force (?); an expressionist film of great power – shot in black-and-white – and dating from the nineteen forties. For, in your fancy, have I hidden under a table in a dark and secluded room? A gloom which cannot completely hide a nimbus of terror then inundates me… as the playing cards are seen to fall from my hand. What were their numbers; or the secret codicils that lie within the tracery of this abandonment? Is it a Gothic architecture under Ruskin (?); or the merest variation of such a contingency? Anyway, those numbers which revive 28

their fortunes are the three of diamonds, (delicately placed), or the six of spades; the King of spades, the Ace of diamonds and the Ace of clubs! Excelsior! Do you notice a numerological configuration between them – at least in terms of those splinter-backs? Are they numbered before the range of such a contempt?

See here… I can add them up for you, a six and the guidance of a three. Does this tot up to or complete the sum of nine? Nine…

numerologically speaking, surely this countenances a high state of consciousness, mysticism, awareness, nobility, metaphysics and mathematical lore? May an advent like this apply to the text as a whole – rather than our unequal selves?”

Trog: “I need to go to the bathroom.”

Punch: “Puppets never require the lather of a latrine…”

Judy: “I am sick of this particular tourney! It revisits a mediaeval joust without the spears… Perhaps if I were to reach out for you now – while looming across this dispensation of briars and thorns?

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(This occurs in the form of a voice over…) Well! My hands moved to embrace him, or otherwise tug at the vestments of his deluded cloth. Were my red ‘raptors – or nails of varnish – about to caress his bow-tie? When suddenly he reared up from the table and leapt with a jerk… the sadic doll, Trog, also went with him; connected to his arm. On and on they rushed out of the restaurant, and both of them succeeded in drawing down the jaundiced eyes of spectators. A solitary wine-glass remained upon the coverlet afterwards… Did he carry his incubus or succubus (whichever) after the fashion of the female satan in Mel Gibson’s The Passion of the Christ? Was ‘she’ a bald, Italianate, leggy supermodel – of an androgynous aspect – or wearing a cowl? Anyway, all I remember were the distinct voices of these two merging into one another –. ‘No, no, never, never, keep your distance from me. It’s all been a mistake; we cannot wed…’

29

‘Take her, you dotard! You shouldn’t be an imbecile forever!

Return to her now – fight for your chance. Don’t renege on your love… each one adores t’other. How can you let her slip through your fingers?’”

Directorial remarks: Silence reigns for a brief moment – in a manner which finds itself sustained by a blinked gap. Its colour intrudes upon grey-to-black.

PART TWELVE

The blonde beauty has reappeared once again. She begins to flashdance anew and within the purview of a barely concealed striptease. Her musical accompaniment (this time around) is Checkmate by Sir Arthur Bliss, the British composer. Has she somersaulted abreast of her back – after the fashion of an amber tambourine as it loosens up before the fates? Over the young woman goes – with a lasso in one glove and trailing after her, plus a violently yellow coif cutting up amidships! With both breasts protuberantly out – she becomes almost suspended in mid-air for a moment. (As the strumpet's spurred boots take one up and over a hinterland of Self!) Are the painted nipples erect when she lands on her knees, thence splashing wetness all over her body? At a time when her gauntleted hands grasp the rope above her face, and the upper part of her form becomes obscured by the luxurious extent of her foaming hair… A compaction that was large enough (in its wig-like deportment) to fill up three-to-four heads other than her own! Still she struts forwards, with an imaginary audience in the palm of her hand, as the main-line remains held across her legs… gauntlet-wise. One eye came to be undisclosed by hair, both grape-fruit were 'out' or covered with streaming water, but the lower part of her anatomy is altered by the cowboy's fastness. Can those tassels be fluttering in an imagined fan… that is: an instrument which causes her to steam off-stage? A stroboscopic light gleams on in the distance…

PART THIRTEEN

Judy: “Now I must react with the vigour of a wounded tiger-shark. So I went up to Punch’s room… the one containing an amphitheatre of mirrors – not to mention some other thespian extras as well. These were the appurtenances of an artiste, such as framed photographs from earlier shows… as well as one ornate dressing-table. A mirror with bulbs around it served as a central reference-point. Behind all of this, a bright scarlet interlude supervenes as a plenitude of blood. Does this haemoglobin-screen shade off into lined purple at the edges of its run? Above all, the time for confrontation was nigh… I took my destiny in both hands and began to speak. Trog – as always –

nestled up against Punch’s shoulder throughout this. Did the puppet look more expectant than usual? Might ‘it’ be more avid, self-congratulatory, dulcet, de-registered, demented and purse-lipped… in comparison to what I am used to? Indeed, how much of all this could be put down to my imagination?

+

My darling, the asperity of non-relief must find its outlet… if our future together is to have any meaning. Don’t you believe in the prospect of a resolution? Haven’t you heard of the marriage counselling service called relate? Can we invigorate the purposive gesture of our being? This ready farce has gone on for long enough. We both share our love… in light of its flame around the brain-pan, why won’t you marry me?”

Punch: “My lips are sealed from fulfilling your utterance or desire. Like in a children’s book of those available dots… we have to fill them in across some invisible spaces. Are we the Cheshire cat – that is: a creature who’s destined to die with a smile on its lips? Forsake me, Judy – register the Devil’s hindmost, for we can only speak of disfigurement lying behind this mask. Have you heard of the Titans and their destination down in Tartarus… amid defeat?”

Judy (edging closer and closer, and with a longing in her eyes): 31

“Perhaps a kiss will make you change your mind?”

Punch: “NNNOOOOOOO! Get away, Judy, before you discover the truth! None but me has a right to fall aslant the impact of puppetry. For example, have you yet to assess Archaos, The Circus of Horrors, Doc Madness, ‘performance art’ after the example of Wyndham Lewis’ Mrs. Dukes’ Millions, Jim Dine’s The Car Crash, and La Fura Dels Baus or ‘vermin from the sewers’ in Catalan? No? Then keep away, I beg you! Nor need we utter the profanations of escapology; and don’t belittle me into revealing my secret horde… if only to go down into death when trapped inside an iron maiden.”

Judy: “Too late, beloved! Too late… AAAAIIIIIEEEEE!, (she screams). What is this?”

PART FOURTEEN

A directorial insistence: Our blonde bomb-shell comes back into the reckoning… She continues to circle the stage amid the medley of a dance. Yet all her attempts to escape are foredoomed

– since she will always be dragged back into the centre of a whirlpool. Is a harpooning attendant on her bronzed flesh? For now, her breasts are out ahead of their step's sprightliness – what with rivulets of water gleaming off or in front. Does the amount of h2o on this arched surface surprise you?

+

Again, the heat on this perspiring skin rose up or onwards, and this was heavy with the colliding dew of the air. Whereas – under the mop of her cascading yellow-hair – she wiggled one melon provocatively… first one nipple and then the other one. Both of them were dyed with a lambent gesture of pumice. But what can those tints be now (?); at least masquerading to orange, green, gold, silver resin and turquoise. Did the latter illustrate the eye-sequins of a peacock – at once screeching at the moon? This water then sprayed off her tension – thereby providing an envelope or sheen around her form… together with gauntleted 32

hands around her back. Both of these had to be dark blue in colour, and they successfully held onto a lassoed switch. Was it coiled behind her in aught of a bundle? Suddenly she turns around in a blizzard of motion; and this action is just to show off her delicately proportioned bare-back and buttocks… avec a pair of cowboy boots coming up to or under her rear. (They are both thigh-high in manner). Furthermore, her peroxided mass whips around her upper-chambers like a lash… whereupon she gathers up the hefty binding above her in a clout. It rears over her blondeness at present; albeit with either of her teats devastatingly displayed… and her legs were wrapped one around t'other (teasingly). Then she cracks the rope beneath her stilettos –

primarily by leaping up and into its noose, as she caroms and cavorts to completeness. This way and back she ducks about…

plus a mist which rises around her in a way that’s fit to vapour-lock. Her silhouette dances a jig upon the floor or under the withering lights, and it involves this skein being held fast across our girl’s torso. (It’s grasped by both fists). Finally, she is seen to run around and around, and such a twine swishes around her like a flail. All of this occurs before the demi-monde comes to a stand-still… in a flashdance where her mammary is pumped forward, her body becomes beaded with sweat, and her sulphurous mop looks aflame. But what eventuates now? For – in an instant of tranquillity – a two of hearts has been projected onto her bust or naked midriff. It denotes the number 2; the secret algebra of the eternally feminine!

PART FIFTEEN

Judy: “As I flung my arms around him in abandonment – and against a background of the deepest red – there took place a fierce CRACK! Oh, what might this mean? Answer me…

beloved! O beguiling one, answer me! Yet he was in no position to respond… since the figurine of Punch had fallen to the ground like a wooden doll: in a situation where ‘its’ arms and legs were disjointed… and they lay on the orange floor, higgledy-piggledy.

Didn’t he resemble an artist’s broken mannequin (then); 33

especially when its limbs are at variance or right-angles to one another? Suddenly, it dawned upon me with a terrible shriek!

Because a reversal of roles has taken place – abundantly so. Let me put it as plainly as I can… for Trog effectively stood before me in triumph. Was it just my fancy (?); or had the creature looked on expectantly at the moment of my embrace? Did I detect that Trog’s thick-lips were open, and this imp of the reverse’s eyes are seen to be glowing with a beady intensity?

Could one feel the pressure behind its skull?”

Trog: “Yes, Judy, you are correct. Punch is dead and gone… but, all along, an observer must recollect that he was just the dummy, while I have remained the ventriloquist throughout this ordeal.

Yet one detail has to illuminate such a denouement – even like a lightning flash trailing after a thunderclap. Do you wait to see it?” (With this soliloquy, the caryatid known as Trog lifted up its gloved hands or gauntlets, and it is in order to detach the nature of a puppet-master’s face. A mask which then peels off like one of Vincent Price’s; if only to reveal a hideous visage underneath… in a scene that’s reminiscent of The Abominable Doctor Phibes! What head does this new Trog evince? Why, it happens to embody a woman’s features – after the circumference of Circe.

Her eyes are necessarily detached from their retinas, but they can also be described as angular, wolfish, aslant, vulpine and full of destructive fire. Do mysterious faery lights float up to their surface? Whereas her mouth looks ravenous, lustful, green, longitudinal and crammed with very sharp teeth!)

+

“Welcome, my aberrant sister! For Trog has disappeared into the mystery of its puppeteering. May it be the fate of all mountebanks – or contortionists of variance – to go down beneath the knife of one’s semblance? Since – under the masquerade of Commedia dell’arte or an English sea-side amusement – mightn’t a more serious drama come to our attention? Do you ask for Punch’s real name? Why, it could only be that of my first husband, Adam. Were all of the previous sins 34

of his inheritance found coruscated in his form… especially when revealed later on as the antics of a wooden man? Does he depict a rickety or balsa sculpture by Reg Butler, thereby (?); that is, a stick which is ultimately broken on life’s wheel. All of it subsists in a process where it will be repeated endlessly or without undue fatalism, and minus an end. Can it be an example of the infinite return? You ask me for your troubled name, woman. Whysoever else… it would only be Eve. Doest thou remember her? She proved to be the one who tempted him – at the insistence of one of my sons – to eat from the Tree of Life which contained on its branches the fruit of good and evil. Me?

What am I called? You ask for my codex or sigil? I am Lilith!

You were Adam’s second wife, but long before and during his one hundred and thirty years… I was the first to wed him. Truly, I happened to be the prior spouse (withal). Up from the filth of mud, lice and bracken – these were those noxious substances from which I came. In this case, Grendel had no need of a mother or an old hag – when my spawn are literally numbered in thousands! My children come down to us as the semiotic of demons… most effectively. Forget Peter Blatty; girl, my brood-time offerants remain Belial, Choronzon, Baal, Lucifer, Astaroth, Dagon, Rimmon, Thamuz and Beelzebub. All of the spirits of the night – all zombies, werewolves and vampires – are the progeny of Lilith. Do you hear? Because without me

there can be no shade, shadow or darkness – and hence no dialectic or the prospect of light. Above everything else, we have to incarnate a sense of timelessness! You continue to demand of me our future astrology. Your own? It shall be to repeat what exists everywhere else – forever and ever. For whenever young children foregather to watch Punch and Judy – no matter how innocently on the abridged sands – WE ARE THERE."

Judy runs away screaming (merely).

35

By way of a visual answer or its coda, an imaginary camera comes to alight on two cards… i.e., a three of diamonds and a six of spades. They total nine or philosophy's accountancy.

THE END

36

GLOCK'S ABATTOIR

A puppet theatre

CHARACTERS IN THE DRAMA: These are Glock, an ossuary attendant or the troupe's amateur clown; and Death's-head, an agent of nemesis or its narration. Two policemen – Constable Smithers and Sergeant O'Rourke – also figure throughout this masque. Whereas various ghouls, boogies, weremen, undead, Siamese twins, zombies (et cetera…) continuously strive to make an appearance.

Act One; Scene One:

Glock is speaking on an old-fashioned telephone: "All Tartarus has broken loose tonight; especially given one's adventure into a garage of fortune. Will you detect such an abundant misery as this? For one's night-time or its wraith lies thick upon the ground roundabouts; a process which was itself sovran within the rights of day-time. Concerning these factors – undue particulars of my damnation aren't really necessary. Certainly, I had leapt

out into the hospital’s advent or its furthermost development… primarily in terms of its tinkling glass. What did I find there? Why, it recalled one of Boccioni’s sculptures – albeit of a futurist indent

– and a macquette that captures an object moving in space.”

Death’s-head mouths in terms of a skull’s patent… He definitely speaks as a voice-over: “Does this matter drift away from you, Glock? Is it out of all proportion to your forgotten years? Doesn’t yonder character wish to seize a moment like this? Let me whisper across your momentum now… For you ran towards an aperture that betokened a twilight of all gloom. Down these corridors you mustered such strength as you possessed; together with a red box around your armoured frame. These lights filtered upon a trespass… and weren’t you limned within its turquoise glare? Suffice it to say, a garland of bay-leaves lay around your tonsured head. (Even though you hardly reassembled a Caesar, like Nero, in Seneca’s or Zeno’s wrath!) No. Your version of 37

George Chapman’s Odyssey became transfixed with an axe; an implement which rose and fell having been taken from several more. All of them glinted – plus many scarlet flecks – amid chiaroscuro’s dwindling tints.”

Glock: “None of this takes cognisance of my position –

effectively trapped here alone as I am. Above all, the moon shone on in a distracted way; at once being pale in its ovoid disc and seeming to be held in by a latticed structure. It affected a blue dye (somewhat resultantly) and was just circumscribed by a Tudor trellis. In one part of this sky stood Joey the Clown – he embodied Glock’s simulacrum thereby… despite sloping off to one side of such a momentum. His face came to be withered in something of a blanched moment; together with orange hair and a Chipperfield’s leer or pout. Might it be ‘Ricardo’s’ family circus (?); when considered to be a cheaper version of the same development. Regardless of this, the peon’s or pueblo monger’s mouth stood chaste or otherwise leaning-to, and it looks void of a winter’s sensibility. Weren’t these eyes also staring – themselves startled in their grease-paint – and yet often glaring out beyond this neck’s ruff?”

Death’s-head: “But no starched quality can hide the Beadle or the bloody black-beetle, as Punch calls him. Isn’t there a quaint English saying that splutters (?):

Step on a beetle, it will soon rain…

Bury it underground, the sun comes out again.

He wears a noir mask or eye-piece – even a coif of linen – over his concealed features. While his face interprets Calcutta’s hole or possibly nullity’s pit (thereafter); and this is despite a compulsive hand-twitch. Can you watch this mimetic drama all the time – like on a toy-theatre minus its ancillary globe? Wasn’t, in this regard, the historian of Montague Summers’ restoration 38

and Punch and Judy the same? His name was fondly remembered as George Speaight.”

Sergeant O’Rourke (when receiving a telephone’s blip): “Listen to me, citizen, or wearer of a crown of thorns! Do you reminisce about some silhouetted hands – all of them held up in a gauntleted or armoured fashion? Each one of these metallic gloves then smashes at tubes, wires and pipes held above its remit. In terms of a pictorial vision (to speak of) it displays Cruikshank’s ‘Punch & Judy’ in a way that’s crossed with Balthus. Still, Glock races on and his form discretely invades purple – what with a pink effulgence beetling around his brows.

But Punch continues to lash out blindly with a halberd; avec its steel becoming bent, roseate and tapering away from any blue…

plus varied trailing ligatures. Isn’t his humped-back form bent over or keenly doubled up (?); and thus withering away to scorn.

Cannot the earth really explode under his blows – thence splintering towards this frame with multiple shards collapsing in?

Such an awning as this (remember) resiles away from without…

it nearly always happens to be a red and yellow tripod found situated on the beach. Are your children ready to run down and inspect it?”

Glock: “I’m trapped up here at St. John’s cemetery – alongside various ghouls who numb the air without. They gather in a conclave outside the window, looking in, and have yellow faces which are presumably spiked or possibly angry. A red shutter closes around their relief! While inside my caretaker’s cabin were gravestones, tombs, obelisks and marbles… all of them taken together with putative mausoleums. A great Edwardian desk festoons the rest; itself replete with cards or systems of observance. These happen to be those messages – ‘dearly beloved’, et cetera… – that Cyril H. Lovegrove sells to its throng.”

39

Death’s-head: “Yet Punch hurls this weapon at Joey’s feet, essentially in order to cascade it towards the ground. He examines its blade cautiously… underneath tapering and ready nails made from pumice. Wasn’t such a mystery obvious? Since Punch has now to be confronted with an ink-dot test… the latter held up by Joey’s mitten. It happened to revisit one of Freudianism’s last templates – at least before H.J. Eysenck destroyed it. Do you wish to reprise his Decline and Fall of the Freudian Empire (?); when fitfully published by Scott-Townsend… a eugenicist press from Washington, District of Columbia. What did he see amid those splotches of paint; each one of them intoning a child’s efforts in water colour or even poster-paint? It betokened an example from Dubuffet’s Art Brut: when this was basically a simplistic rejoinder to the surrealist movement. Whereas Mister Punch – for his part – observes naught other than what is presented to him. Even though once the card was discarded, Jack Ketch lingers upon its projection from behind. There are two of ‘him’ – every one of which is contained in egg-cups… what with a metallic tracing connecting his two heads! Might they embody a speeded up version of Cruikshank’s engraving, as catalogued by J.P. Collier in 1828? Possibly… yet here the executioner wore a head-dress, together with a cape.”

Act One; Scene Two:

Sergeant O’Rourke: <<His colleague, Constable Smithers, listens on primly. He has a tabloid or a supermarket newspaper in his hands. It probably undoes Fortean Times in its irrelevancy.>>

“You say that you’re haunted by bogeys, man? Can you substantiate their existence? May they rekindle the following integers? Since one of Judy’s tasks is to release us from this imponderable, primarily by means of pulling up a chair. Will Joey be forced to pluck a card from her exposed fan, in terms of a game of whist’s ready witness? Could it possibly be the photograph which adorns Anthony Burgess’ Clockwork Orange

– when cobbled together by Lionel F. Williams? It became known as ‘Eye’ or ‘cogs’. Nonetheless, this smear of paint 40

interprets a hint of treacle… for it betokened some pain, but not too much. Because Punch continuously leered on at his counterparts – plus a pane of latticed glass falls sheer behind them. Regardless of all this: the Beadle – or a magistrate’s assistant – cracked a sick-joke before him. ‘Where’s the Baby?’;

‘Don’t know, I’ve eaten it’ … et cetera. The moon continues to glint onwards – basically by suffusing the stain of an attendant window. In furtherance of which… a padre, who wears a dunce’s hat, turns to make a remark. He reeked of false piety; together with both eyes being exalted in heaven’s direction. Indeed, his ebon orbs were almost popping out of their skull! Wasn’t he called the Methodist on occasion (?); and isn’t this the merest dig at Wesleyian pretensions? ‘What do you accomplish by dint of mayhem?’, he asks the Devil who’s stood alongside him. Satan just seems to stare dreamily into the middle-distance. (Don’t forget, my friends, that all of these characters present themselves as glove-puppets). ‘Why, I’d choose to molest her transparent beauty’, he declared in a hollow voice or timbre… while assessing the night-sky. Meanwhile, all of these personifications can be viewed – whether presumably naked or end-over fist – by a suit of playing cards. They are laid out in a manner which reveals their sequined backs to us, primarily in the form of a wooden-castle that’s constructed from sand. Didn’t Franz Kafka write a novel by betraying one of those titles? Anyway, a blind beggar confusingly makes such points to himself or

inside his own world. He jabbers and signs repeatedly; all of it reminiscent of a mummers' play ahead of these silhouettes and other numb-skulls."

Act One; Scene Three:

Sergeant O'Rourke: "Describe where you are now…"

Glock: "Well! It surfaces as a shack some way off from the good or available earth. Does it sprout with the munificence of Milton's poesy (thereafter)? The structure's outlines were surely irregular (?); when taken together with haphazard oblongs 41

shifting out of such a tracery. Behind this cubicle the sky waxed purple; at once overcome by a pregnant silence. A yellowing light – when either grilled or prolonged – then segmented its aggrieved square… Were such moths attracted to its lustre or polarity; thereupon to beat their wings? While – out in front – lay a graveyard of the palest blue. This ossuary square consisted of menhirs, pediments, obelisks, kneeling centaurs or Gothic incunabula. Yes, even the odd Cleopatra's needle continues to break this sky – merely by fixing its ascent perpendicularly to those surrounding graves. Did it fail to illustrate a volume like Rupert Gunnis' British Sculptural Dictionary, 1660-1851 – that is: from the Stuart restoration to a Victorian great exhibition?

Whereupon we move away from lodging a complaint against Richard Westmacott the Elder, for instance… particularly as regards his statue to James Dutton, hailing from Sherborne, Gloucestershire, in 1791. Wasn't an angel depicted there – when fully robed, female, and trampling upon death? It took a skeleton's form at this juncture."

Constable Smithers speaks for the first time across his colleague:

"What do you require of us?"

Glock: "Help me, I'm being besieged by the underworld!"

These two policemen then reply in unison: "WE'll BE RIGHT

OVER, SIR!”

Act One; Scene Four:

Death’s-head: “Their police sirens continued to level any clarion due to them – basically by cutting through the dawn (just so).

Each yellow or ochre sliver sliced its own atmosphere into neat halves – almost all of it on the run and as a consequence of a blaring tannoy’s accompaniment. Might it be a horn of abandonment (?); rather like a Butlin’s amusement… albeit in reverse. It made the following sound or white noise, a cacophony that’s almost donkey-like in its braying.

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AAAAAAAAAIIIIIIIIIIIEEEEEEEEE, it ran. Many people found it to be highly irritating… but soon the vehicle screeched up at this tabernacle or graveyard. A plenitude of waves (these were) which captured or flowed over crooked trees; themselves transfixed by shadows and yet broken before the wind. They are blackened in a frenzy or twisted, twig-like and offered up to Belial! Now then: these graves or cornices leered up around this particular caprice… for these policemen have reached St. John’s, you see. But they weren’t completely aware of Weston’s fate which awaited them – primarily since his reliefs prefigured those by William Blake. They seemed to be funereal, (abundantly so): and yet they also spat in temperance’s face! Let’s look at part of his monument to Jonathan and Elisabeth Ivie in St. Petrock’s church, Exeter, in 1717… for example. It spoke of blood in the bone or siphons of relief, and it heralded even Donatello’s priority or over-view. Most especially – in my case – it delineated a foretaste of twin skull-heads; one on either side of two leaves that were smoothed down in stone.”

Act One; Scene Five:

Constable Smithers: “It appears to be quiet or almost abandoned in terms of its practical effects. Yet who can really spot what integers lurk within this

vista? Doesn’t a bat scream in darkness in order to see? Nonetheless, all of Glock’s cigarettes have been stubbed out in an ash-tray or its heavy glass. No-one is prepared to discern what goes on here (you notice); at least when positioned next to a window of serrated panes which are held in blue. The Devil stares on and on throughout, and this is reminiscent of Fred Tickner’s puppets when manufactured in their wooden usage. Yet didn’t he wish to avoid hanging them due to the latent humanoid within? Certainly, Satan looked out at a glorious moon or such a terraqueous orb. Again, we must notice whether its pitted surface reflected white amid grey, or otherwise remained charged and unruffled. Whereas the sky above his horns swirled with an azure wash; at once embodying 43

one of Turner’s sea-scapes… no matter how distantly.

Meanwhile, Clown Joey continued to rub his hands – helter-skelter like – up and down the side of an Egyptian sarcophagus.

It proved to be shiny or pellucid; after a reflection of lapis lazuli or lost alabaster. ‘Evil has to be the result of a profound boredom’, he mused. Whilst an enormous silver clock – with two giant hands – lay behind his example. What time did it indicate, then (?); it was merely five to midnight; if not the eleventh hour of John Tyndall’s vintage. Related to all of this – the anti-hero of our particular mystery play says to Joey, ‘we’re bored’. – A statement about which the clown responded uncertainly. His brow beetled further or then became furrowed. But subsequently, he shrilled inanely or with his lips pursed into a compressed grin.

‘I know’, he retorted. ‘Let’s pull a joke from this Christmas cracker; it’s made in Hong Kong like all the others.”

Act One; Scene Six:

Sergeant O’Rourke: “All waxes still in this place – even down to the insects. Nor does any noise whatsoever originate from our caretaker’s hut. Didn’t Pinter, Beckett’s amanuensis or mock-secretary, write a play of the same name? Anyway, the clock-face has changed its aspect at this juncture – possibly when pursuant to a new or nethermost dial. Might it show off a

sun-dial this time around? Could it really be contained by the Hesperides – i.e., what Voltaire called the gardens of the West?

Furthermore, a time-piece like this waxes unique in its antiquity; what with a collection of Roman numerals over its surface. For the village of Bix in south Oxfordshire was once a military camp, you know? It's a case of B… 9; a true travesty or reversal of Howard Brenton's decadent play The Romans in Britain."

Constable Smithers: "Punch approaches us hereafter… He's merely jigging himself along like a marionette, but actually he proves to be more of a glove puppet. He addresses the Policeman during a quiet moment. All of them swirl in a haze (thereafter); or is it, quite properly, something of a dry-ice mist? It seeps up 44

from behind our set or music-hall stage. This wooden-top (for his part) indicates a Victorian propriety: what with a conical helmet, a blue-dyed conch, a truncheon and a Dixon of Dock Green sense of gravitas. Perhaps it illustrates a model that had been carved, painted, varnished, re-touched and dressed by Wal Kent, the Punchman? Remember now: no Jew can ever become a professor

– the performer or individual who exhibits mister Punch. It remains a totally Anglo-Saxon form or pursuit."

Sergeant O'Rourke: "Punch continues to talk to the copper…

while Joey the Clown, with streaming orange hair, occasionally glides around in the background. A darkness enshrouds both of them; making them oblivious to all the other time-pieces roundabout. Yet the bite of Joey's grin could do for either of these dolls; especially when he seems to bend down or belch…

and this is almost to chew a garment's corner. During this act his brow remains coruscated, unwholesome, livid or tremulous with drops of blood. These are continuously being renewed in order to cover over its source. Might he disinterr an alter ego of Glock's

– that is to say, one which was gone but not forgotten?

Altogether, my friends and public, it speaks of a shell lunacy or an approximation to Strindberg's Occult Diary. Still, such an etheric disposition rests apace… while Punch speaks in his swazzle (whether squeaky or alliterative) to the Policeman. He can only be properly dressed if in a sapphire's quartz. 'The quietness outside Glock's keep has to be responded to. It sinks down its own plug-hole; at once lonely or equivalent to those circling irons.' 'I don't obey your diction, Clown', menaced the Law. Really? For Punch – with his blue eyes staring – had already begun to trill. Moreover, his costume proves to be scarlet plus brilliant yellow-buttons or tufts, together with a dramatic frieze. Whilst the 'nose' proceeded to curse ever more liberally and protuberantly. Its wall-to-wall or glove-puppet smile, however, creases on from ear to ear. Can you observe it? Mayhap these figurines were drawn from Michael Byrom's collection of Punchmen? Anyway, he chooses to be a hollow-man who leers 45

away without mirth; after the fashion of Waddington's playing cards. A connexion with tarot cards' digits also draws out your number."

Act One; Scene Seven:

Death's-head enunciates by way of narration: "The two policemen have shown aught of their contemptuous vigil – firstly as witnesses of the above. Secondly, they approach this hermit's hut – or his allotment's bastion – with drawn revolvers. Neither man-jack of them, though, has yet arrested a ghost during their special constabulary. Let's eavesdrop upon their converse…

albeit with the tombs limned in blue against chiselled magenta all around."

Constable Smithers: "The warrant for his arrest has been issued by providence, but only as a relief from some direct action.

Punch toyed with a gun as well as a maniacal grin – when abreast of all these statements. Momentarily, such an act or tragi-comedy stalled – if it can be described like the shutter-movement on an old camera. May it encompass atonality (?); or a moving away from the diatonic range in Sir Harrison Birtwhistle's opera Punch and Judy? It was the first effort to make

the grade – without hinting at any reverse or involving Russell Hoban. Necessarily so: since no deus ex machina becomes available for these harlequins or dithyrambic spectators… after Wyndham Lewis'

fashion in the Wild Body. Couldn't Bestre be seen as Picasso's vision when crossed with that of a manikin, and looked at in a Vorticist's eye? Yes?"

Sergeant O' Rourke: "True enough! Yet Punchinello wafted a gun around his head while grinning inanely; and the muscles in his imaginary neck corded behind-hand. Meanwhile, a gas swirled in its pageantry or swoon; thus illuminating divers shapes. The outlines or penumbras of a Peeler and Clown Joey became discernible, thereby. What could one do? It also waxed rather lyrical, ceteris paribus, because the law officer had a 46

vermillion balloon tied to his head by dint of a piece of flex. In one fell swoop of aggression, then, Punch placed his blunderbuss next to some wood and fired. This was followed by a fierce crack, a smidgeon of red paint and a slumped puppet athwart the stage. He partly brought down the backing-curtain behind him –

although this is primarily due to a mistake. 'Huzza, Huzza', lauded Punch, 'the Devil looks dead or otherwise molten!'

(Editorial note: There's some mistake here, surely? For has the eternal harlequin chosen to mix up temporal with spiritual authority? Like those Gnostics of yesteryear, does he infer that this world comes to be lorded over by flies?) Anyway, he might as well put the weapon to Judy's skull next – particularly if the Baby doesn't cease its ballyhoo. 'Children, children, play and reel', lampoons our Punch, 'especially when hop-scotch offers its toes!' Because when one thinks about it anew – can dualism be ended so easily?"

Act One; Scene Eight:

Death's-head: "The Sergeant and his Constable continue to interrogate one another hereafter. Basically, it may only amount to a hammer without its tongs."

Constable Smithers: "Our witnessing of such a delusion distresses me."

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Why so (?); your pistol is drawn.”

Constable Smithers: “Any handy revolver indicates the murder of a million Sabine women! In such circumstances as these, a parallel can be drawn with the House of Atreus.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “In terms of Caryl Churchill’s demotic translation from Seneca’s latin, you mean?”

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Constable Smithers: “Thou hast said it! Your impermanence or remembrance – when noted before this locution – must fit the blue uniform about our sleeves.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Yet again, my man, you will have to trust to your intestinal fortitude! Do you take my drift?”

Constable Smithers: “My brother in arms, our correct witness has to be an eagle devouring its witness in the stump of a tree.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “You’re saying that Herbert Spencer’s natural fallacy isn’t one?”

Constable Smithers: “To be sure of it… For those eyes which stare out yonder are the false exhibits of a Turner Prize.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “But haven’t I an exhibit of my own blood that’s frozen at its heap (?), primarily in order to test against these misstatements.”

Constable Smithers: “With your talent for linear anecdote, comrade, isn’t it obvious whether you should have been an epigraph writer?”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Won’t I become one – in relation to those epitaphs on the graves all around us? Hasn’t Harold Pinter’s death been announced on a recent radio broadcast (withal)?”

Act One; Scene Nine:

Death’s-head: “Two sets of eyes narrow their witness ahead of us, even aslant of any effective victory or its surmounting.

Further, those slits which stare out at you vary from green to red; basically via its semblance to purple and orange. It was in this hazy twilight or Tropicana that the creature is first seen. Did it choose to bear in mind the Crocodile from a traditional Punch and Judy? When we have to remember – in Piccini’s or Porsini’s 48

day – that we were really talking about dragons like in Beowulf.

A curvature in space was limned as a consequence; the former enfolding in an open silence. Yet still it came on and on… its maturity of consciousness giving rise to a brazen fact, even as it stalked its prey. Could it be an observation of the mid-wife toad (?) in Arthur Koestler’s diction; when crossed, as it might be, with a tremulous reptilian stem or stain at the base of the brain?

Some chose to interpret it as evil’s root… do you? For this mastodon has a scaled hide – or possibly a red eye – which opened within such a disc’s diameter! A cornea that waxes somewhat split, necessarily, in terms of an eye’s wonderment or cloth. Moreover, a pale extremity looked out over its May day; and it took on the scene’s residue with a smudge of sun. Didn’t it break up before any other optical illusion? Anyway, Punch’s pot-bellied form – when adorned with its cap and bells – reared up from behind a stanchion which is suffused by a napthol mugg.

Can it be heat induced?”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Really? Since you know that Punch cascades onto the reptile from above or aslant, and amid a dark shower of molten glass. Will this saurian turn over slightly –

when spread-eagled to such a feast with a grappling Punchinello?

Does he hold onto his head, thereby? It’s then that mister Punch penetrates him using destiny’s spear – whether or not one chooses to hold aloft James

Herbert’s locution. Wasn’t it Longinius’ shaft which splintered Christ’s side at Golgotha? Yes.

One good turn deserves another; especially in relation to staunching thirst with vinegar-water.”

Constable Smithers speaks to us in an observant vein: “Truly, we are entranced before a Stygian keepsake! A scenario where one motivation astride the dawn leads to an enclosure… Didn’t this T-Rex come at him with arms flailing (?); themselves just signalling a wide in cricket, or occurring against a criss-crossed blue background. Certainly, our spear has pushed through the reptilian hide; thence emerging at the other end… or with a 49

casket of rheum around it by way of red. Surely, we recognise whether Trevor Ravenscroft wrote The Spear of Destiny (?) – an occult primer from which Herbert’s effort is a mere redaction.

Nonetheless, this titan – while pinned to the spot of its own tree –

resembles Michelangelo’s musculature on many a sculpture.

(One can only canvas his monumental Abraham with hunger, for example!) Similarly, may a pinion’s break be hidden by this joust; albeit by dint of Punch’s arm? It broke off, rather creatively, when snapping in two or inside our ‘raptor: i.e., a saurian who raises some toothy laments against sun-fire! Isn’t it so, sarge?”

O’Rourke replies in a pensive mien: “A fine mess, dear boy…

Because one branch has broken into two limbs of Heaven…

whenever Punch’s teeth were clenched together in a manic grin, as unfolded by Geoffrey Howick’s linocut. Wherein our desperado rides into the future with a stick in his hand, or atop a hobby-horse which nods towards the fray. But what of the Great Beast, as tabulated in Revelations by having the number 666

upon its brow? Might it find itself let go or cruciform (?); and manipulated or possibly let down, thereby? Could this incarnate or congeal Man's son upon the cross, once made of cedar, or all-father Odin on the world-tree that had been foregrounded in ash?

All of this doesn't even mention Attis, the castrati, who went down 'neath a poniard as a pine rises majestically above. No Ganymede for Agdistis' syrinx may be found, lest Midas chooses a wife to exacerbate fate!"

Act One; Scene Ten:

Death's-head: "Smithers and O'Rourke creep closer to the caretaker's domicile. Furthermore, a network of eyes seems to cover or follow their every move. For these peep o' day boys gesture from behind some lintel; thence glistening betwixt opaque squares of glass.

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Also, a different mind-set exists within such blue-boys now… It is a sort of Johnny Got his Gun by Dalton Trumbo – albeit without an abattoir's salient detour. Speaking of which, a squeak was heard in the distance or amidships… as a wheel-chair moves itself into the light. It glides forwards with a commingled grace –

at once lost in time-travel. Yet could it be the register of a fallow despair… betimes? It happened to be the Doctor who's approaching you. CLACK, CLACK, CLACK ran his chair's runners. On he came – always being unpardonable as a witness to certainty – and with a gloomy penumbra streaking away aft.

Cripples always depress us – to be sure. But here, various pipes lead away after one another, trellis-like, and above his frame…

no matter what physic had been induced upon. Again, the marvel of strangers seems to be upon us; the latter merely listing to a kept plenty or abundance… namely, one that has iron grills on the walls. This apothecary

soon reaches a corner; if only to turn around it and trundle out into a renewed vista. Might it be called a studio vista? Still, the oblong of a door lay beyond his meandering chair – plus the reality of two female mannequins-in-store before an end to this chance. They wore a dioxazine purple which shaded into a brilliant blue, and this is often minus a feminine affidavit that pouted meaningfully. He doubtless wore the handle-bar moustache, stiff collar and bald pate of yore. (For aren't we referring to the 'doctor' in Punch and Judy?) Yet this time our quack appears to be subdued. 'Where are you, mister Punch?', he intoned in a plush voice. A pall of silence then intruded… 'Well now, go to Hell and back!', he stormed. 'Who says I need you to get through this "Clockwork Orange"?'

Likewise, he bent down to his quarry or ventricle… thus speeding the chair forwards. It spurted along a grey estuary or its pasture, with the concrete reverberating away in its chiaroscuro… Could it intone one of le Corbusier's formulas?

May it have been an attempt to take the brute out of 'Brutalism'?

No matter: since a sudden kick cannons into the chair from behind; thereby causing it to carom like a billiard ball. Moreover, the foot that engineers such an absence happens to be Punch's…

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It comes across as tasselled, without bunions, low-down and drawn together on a red slipper: as well as tied aslant with the afterthought of a yellow ribbon. Didn't the director John Ford make such a film with John Wayne – one which pertains to this sash? Lilting to one's tune, therefore, the Doctor's wheels revolve around and around in a tail-spin prior to their collapse.

When suddenly – he pitches forwards with a cry and plummets down some empty stairs… in a situation where the device moves in silhouette, occasionally by reverberating its overall tension.

For himself, the quack was pitched up at the steps' bottom in a square of lighter grey or pumice. Do two parts of a trellis in candle-light laterally

transpose themselves across his puppet?

Can they be a cross – or one particular purview in Giotto's terms

– that indicates a grave? Consequently, from this prone hand two spirits emanate upwards: one must be a stylised or etheric version of the Devil; the other a pompous medical practioner in blue livery. By Gad!"

Act One; Scene Eleven:

O'Rourke and Smithers howl in unison by way of a chorus… or shan't it really be a threnody(?): "Look how we approach those sets of eyes which stare out at the moon… because each one comes surrounded by varied diameters in focus. Yet – when combined together – we whirl around some statues of our fondest desire. They collide with Boccioni's Unique Forms of Continuity in Space; especially when roaring along towards oblivion or another such gateway. Furthermore, variously contingent sculptures block the way forward. They happen to be Brancusi's Torso of a Young man and the same carver's The Cock – but not Will Self's Cock 'n' Bull! No. Anyway, this premier variant revisits a Greek hoplite – one who has been helpfully crossed with Robocop by way of a Tardis. Whereas this Romanian's crystals indicate two legs beneath a trunk; a macquette that's been severed at the lips or haunches, and it calls out to Professor Gunter von Hagens' corpse art. Might it regain the status of an instrument's yearning? For Constatin Brancusi's other work dons 52

the mantle of a fool's cap – itself wrought by lightning or vigour, and in lieu of a cock's crow. Dare we suggest a relationship with these lines by W.H. Auden? They are taken from the poem For the Time Being:

Alone, alone about a dreadful wood

Of conscious evil runs a lost mankind…

Dreading to find its Father.

Death's-Head: "Gingerly, the two policemen edge closer to a desolate shack. Both of their batons have been drawn from each other's sabretache…

at once heralding the day. Because these men approach such a rope's tension without pity, or in a way which proves otherwise envious of the morning. What colours enclose their entry into a star-gate like this? Why, every pigment dances before us many times and is illustrative of nought save a Black Sun. These tones habituate themselves to a majestic dye -

— whether rufous brown, ochre, a grey leaven, pumice or a trail towards a dullish green. Suddenly, a yellow square opens amid this darkness – and Glock stood at its epicentre or wake. Was he dappled in orange tints around the midriff (?); primarily so as to cry out like Munch's howler on the bridge… Do you remember the bourgeois couple with a parasol or an umbrella; and who limber up out back? Given Israeli devastation of the Gaza strip, don't neo-Trotskyists in the West superimpose a swastika on the Star of David?"

Glock: "HA! HA! HA! HA! HE! HE! HE! HE! HO! HO! HO!

HO!"

Sergeant O'Rourke: "How comes this unseemly mirth, dog?

State your business presently; if any pertains to you."

Act Two; Scene One:

Death's-head: "Glock leant against the door's partition or boundary-marker. Its frame looks somewhat spotted in the 53

direction of a blue-light – particularly when cast in svelte skin or serge, and its unaccompanied by any distinct witnesses.

Moreover, the caretaker was beside himself with hilarity – and he just held his stomach in tightly or abruptly, while massaging it with a free hand. Could he possibly be interpreting Jim Crow's filibuster – as drawn from Punch and Judy's fayre or carnival?

All of a sudden, one has an intimation of Hogarth's engraving which dealt with The Humours and Diversions of Southwark Fair (circa. 1733).

Wherein a black booth, a pin-hole camera and a sensory deprivation chamber have risen up… even possibly to dance or twist. Now Jim's puppet dribbled along in this twilight

– one that originally cleaved to 'political incorrectness' or its lustre: but it also remained watchful over what might turn up. Do you get me, o liberal chaff? Since his big or blubbery lips were looming up, and they appeared to be justifiably red in terms of their tincture… Yet Punch repeatedly hits him with a stave –

itself 'worrying' for a Guardian correspondent to witness. Soon the glove-puppet who is known as the booth's N—— slid down towards the floor, and such violence seems appropriate or apportioned to its game. Indeed, this diaspora African didn't even have time for his song… that is to say: the Jim Crow slave chant (so mentioned).

Wheel about, turn around, like so, Jim Crow;– caracole, give it a roll, fire me clean, Billy-o, Jim Crow… I'm hangin(') and burnin(') from a tree! Ain't this some jazz?

Constable Smithers: "What business do you have with any guffaw o' witness?"

"I'll tell ye, officers and men", roared Punch… I mean Glock: "I reached out after you on false pretences, see? Because you thundered on with sirens atonal or droning, and it was merely to shake a dwarf's hand. I laugh and caper herein… HO! HO! HO!

HO! Look at you – this is the greatest amount of fun a denim-wearer can have short of playing with oneself. Yes sir! Since 54

you've proven by your actions that you really believe in ghouls!

Wasn't it you who came running towards me; albeit through a haze of Prussian blue which melds into pewter? Again, such rivalry as this ricocheted across the heavens. Whilst, in the middle of our whirligig, a torso rose up in order to fill the dimensions of a mental screen. It rendered itself either Riefenstahlian or Thorakian by turn. It also possessed some

pitted muscles – when built up by steroids – and rising tier upon tier in a manner that's pectoral yet unabridged. Did they illustrate those Charles Atlas advertisements of yesteryear? These were the ones which are redolent of a Californian beach or carney scene –

i.e., one of those tourneys that Arnold Schwarznegger originated from? Do you register the fact of his election to be the Golden state's governorship, now? Anyway, these teen messages embodied the following output: 'a weedy, pimply adolescent who's running to fat? Don't let them kick sand in your face, squirt! For a mere two dollars and ninety-five cents you can enjoy a brand new body. Look like a classical sculpture in your own laundromat… et cetera.' Yet has such a figure – in many ways reminiscent of the Strongman in Crowley's tarot – actually severed a bloodied head? He came to dispense with its robotic cranium (thereby). Likewise, it fell away with this chain-saw's beheading or pulp, and plus a delinquent pap or severance weeping from its reversed blades. It simultaneously looked like an illustration from Flemish art that had been crossed with an MTV jump-cut. Never mind… because a left-over of the Capeks'

drama has fallen to the ground. It (in turn) strove to renew its nature through some fractured and broken metal… all of this delineating some pink rust or its shadow via a semblance of payne's grey. Unfortunately, no silver coffin-handles seek to further its cause…"

Both of the policemen, whether the constable or his sergeant, then speak together: "So there were no bogies, bogles, vampires, banshees, wraiths, zombies, will-o-the-wisps, human fish, wrecking crew… *etc*. For – whether scripted by the music of 55

Henry Lawes or not – Milton's comus rout hesitates to make its entry."

Glock: "Verily – it must be a pointed or transparent case!"

The fuzz then respond in a corporate fashion: "You have contrived to bring us out here on a false alarm… at least bereft of all dungeons and dragons?"

Glock: "It may prove to be extant in terms of some penetrative facts."

One’s boys-in-blue are keening over a new crusade now: “Do you have any reason for such an unsolicited absence? You know that it happens to be an offence to waste police time?”

Glock: “Spare me the officious trivia, officers. For don’t you understand how boring it can be to one like me… namely, to wilt here or within death’s pall? So – in circumstances such as these –

one’s given to manufacture what fun one wishes. A big joke contrives to fry the little ones to dust, radioactively speaking.

I’ve discovered in my researches (you see) that loneliness may often be slaked by a police siren’s burst or commodious whistle.

Wherein those flashing lights instil some abundant comedy –

whether close at hand or out there under a red-and-yellow awning. Doesn’t it occur astride the narrows of a confining beach

– whence Punch’s tragi-comedy is performed?”

Death’s-head: “In this instant or shard, the police don’t recognise their playwright or scribbling colt. For, by virtue of the fact that he sucked pomegranates from a lotus, he or ‘it’ lay necessarily up to speed. Since Glock chose to swoon nakedly before a cable’s electrical discharge – instead of which the voltaic current lifted him off to oblivion. His face seemed to be stricken or otherwise ashen; and this was before its clear implementation into ultramarine… or its registering of every condenser’s bleep. What colours were these kaleidoscopic tints (?); as they came to be

symbolised by a skull’s absence or a jutting towards the bone –

never mind the mighty ohm! Every semblance or play-time then lifted its wire; the former itself crackling with intent… indeed, this atmosphere kindles or proves to be alive avec motes. Each electron cuts into this ether and defines its overall sapphire rhapsody (thereby). Looking up – and with his cranium masked by an infantile projection – our caretaker cascades

within such living lightning. (Even though all such distended spectrums have been assembled hitherto). Might it illustrate an exercise in what musicians call ‘the Blues’? Certainly, whether we’re speaking of prussian, ultramarine, phthalo, cobalt, cerulean, brilliant, phthalo turquoise, pearlescent… et cetera: all are there. Yet neither of these policemen notices this phenomenon, and they basically pass on from an electric chair that’s mantled in a haze. Didn’t Andy Warhol do a silk-screen print of a scene like it – i.e., essentially an exercise in ecce homo which found itself covered by an identical pigment? Glock, still waxing compos mentis anew, wants to quibble about one particular word. It chooses to be pig and meant – get it? HA! HA! HA! HA!”

Nonetheless, our two guardians are busy encompassing Charon’s way: “Cease your scratchings at such unbidden wounds, fool!

Also, never dare to call us out again on an uncouth legend. For you’ll be arrested and sent to the magistrate’s court else. You’ve had your fun (my poltroon); learn to quit while you’re ahead of the blade – why don’t you?”

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Their Parthian shot crashes out as follows: “You must watch your step, my blithering caretaker! Don’t ever presume to contact us again unless you’re really in trouble, if you know what’s good for you. Furthermore, you shall have occasion to sign off now or contract your living will…”

Act Two; Scene Two:

Death’s-head: “It must be twenty-four hours on from our tragedy at the graveyard’s or caretaker’s hut. Indeed, Glock signals his 57

present isolation or its loneliness, and this was primarily by sitting to one side in the stands. He whistles a Londonderry air within the sky-light of a subdued glow. To one side of his present impasse, however, a candle burns fitfully and with an intermittent or golden flicker. It happens to be stuck in an urn or a green-bottle; and this eldritch fugg merely flexes ‘its’ muscles using some wax. Might such a container be an amphora – or a vessel of an ancient turn – under our radiance’s slough? (Isn’t the definitive edition of

H.P. Lovecraft’s poetry called The Ancient Track?) Moreover, the entire scene-scape had to be filled over by a ready translucence; thence marking up the void, its molecular space or recalling a Cathar gleam. Wasn’t this the light within which so charged le Corbusier’s vision? Wherein one special heresy can lead – through an Albigensian’s pout – towards a nimbus of eternity. Now then, the colours involved in this were an orange that’d been manufactured out of lead – primarily by way of happenstance’s heat or Zeus’ bolts. Yet, in all conscience, everything has been suffused by a cadmium yellow. Truly, Glock is profoundly bored and hungers for the police van, if not this chase’s excitement. Couldn’t it possibly be a time to subdue the Devil’s witness?”

Glock: “Would their forms approach me or residually slake my thirst – at once pretending to be porcine in the darkness? To be sure: a sky that waxed both ebon and claret intruded. It led away from where we were gathered – and merely seemed to pursue a lifting up – at least by dint of a Ganymede’s tracery. Will you detect a foul hominid who lurks within such boughs? It stirs something of a customary essence or its blight, you see. (Even though this slope above to the griffin lay replete, plus the motivation for its angel’s nomenclature. Similarly, some intentional lichen lay all about us – and this was despite our penchant for letting off guns. Did these wraiths smart at our pain? May the lips of a curlicue or a blunderbuss like this seek shelter under a roof’s covering… and by hurling one-to-one inside a claw (thereby)? Might a sexual dimension obtrude?”

58

Death’s-head: “A three-spronged trident hits against some gravel; therein to loosen an atonal sound or its semblance!

Someone has struck pay-dirt down in the deep (a la Peter Benchley) or adjacent to a sepulchral vault. It came to be hemmed in on three sides, my masters, and was understandably cubical in its modernist infractions. At the centre of it lay our Glock; a character who is just farming the floor with a moment’s indifference. Can he be Neptune – especially when given a post-modern focus, or otherwise seeking the truth in graffiti art and such illuminations? Mark you: when he chose to examine himself in the compass of a hand, he knew that he was born a woeful witness. In another

intervention, a bearded Glock went round and round and around within a tetragrammaton o’ the spirit. Glock had become old now – or found himself encircled by mist as well as brackish over a lost innocence. Each and every hair may have splintered to a greyish-white whilst one looks on.

Whereas Glock was observed tracing patterns in the dirt – no matter how waylaid or after one such closure’s abundance. What may he be articulating here? Surely, it has nothing to do with those traditions and customs which were contained in Alexander Howard’s Cavalcade? But – more realistically than ever – it doubtless relates to all of those Punchmen who haven’t been born. These are individuals like Wal Kent, Geoff Felix, Waldo Lanchester, Michael Byrom, Fred Tickner, Glyn Edwards, John Stafford, Tom Kemp, Sidney de Hempsey, Jesson, Professor Smith, Percy Press Junior and Senior, Martin Bridle, John Styles, Smokey the Clown, Bryan Clark, John Alexander, Pete Maggs, Rod Burnett, Barry Smith, Professor Panic, Caz and Sergei Obraztsov… *et al.* What did the experimental novelist, B.S.

Johnson, say about a salvation through lists?

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At a last parade Glock finds himself strapped, intermittently, to an electric-chair. He is stark naked. Will it backfire upon his ready physical needs? Who can tell the truth about this? Because the road for any diplomacy announces no end in sight… Yet, all of a sudden, a streaking guff of air was melted into some pitch 59

alongside it. You see: Glock had begun to burn, sizzle and fry –

whilst his face resiled to an oval like in a Bacon triptych. A smidgen of ozone then fills the ether; thereby linked to a flame or cut off by its transparent breeding. The caretaker disappears now… and his features look to be illumined, charcoaled, barbecued – even odalisque. Each new immodesty strives to curdle the mouth ‘white’ amid some brown. For what remains after a fire other than its embers?”

Glock: “Again, I stared above me only to disinterr a longitude’s snout or shadow. It pointed directly towards the south by way of a clustered

embrace. These found themselves to be joined together or interlinked, membrane by membrane…

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Glock (half an hour later on): “I know another wheeze – at once by turning a hoop or twisting a jester’s clout! I’ll ring the police once more so as to indicate my addiction to fun. One call always brings the house down… somewhat imperturbably.”

BRING; BRING…

xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx Sergeant O’Rourke: “Hello?”

{Death’s-head: By way of a spectral implementation or its stage-set; i.e., an amphitheatre that’s pursuant to a dream’s estrangement… Wherein Glock reappears – at least momentarily

– in the guise of Mister Punch. ‘Hello, children’, he says. To which O’Rourke replies in consternation: ‘pardon?’ Punch, for his part, comes dressed in a traditional attire or its vaudeville; together with a red cap of braid, felt lower-lips and grasping wooden-hands. He glides onto the stage avec his mitts up in mock-abandonment… a glove-puppet like no other! Do you detect such a deliberation or purport? For – up above this clockwork regulation or silence – one was free or able to see the 60

interface of a miniature stage roundabouts. Come on now: since its appurtenances commandeer the gilding of so much gold that’s been taken off the premises. Whereupon a half-moon or crescent is seen partly over to the left; plus a circular measuring device (when Imperial in its ditty) returns the weight of its misjudgement. Are you clear about it, mon ami? Has the worm fully turned from its abundant folly? Let those crystal shards fall limply to the floor amid autumnal leaves… Again, and over the permanence of this measuring jug, one can spy a thespian mask which had been made of bronze. It contrived to be heavy, cast in gold, foursquare and reminiscent of the theatrical intentions of ancient Greece. Its eye sockets happen to be

fluted and evil; while the mouth remains cavernous or wide-open. Up above this hood or face-covering – and pursuant to a space atop its head –

one can discern some orchids. These flowers are brilliantly white or festooned towards a nimbus of death; thereby indicating the musk of the grey lotus… A poison (this) which blossoms in a location far to the east.

Punch appears before us once again. He glides forwards in an arc and finds himself contained by an original socket. His eyes bulge from their retinas – particularly when abreast of such wood as this with his cap and ball. A blanched ruff surrounds his neck at this point; especially given those red and yellow stripes which taper down such an awning. The Beadle or policeman is also seen to be hanging around there. This law officer evinces something of a starched wig, a cravat, a monocle and a turned up moustache. Does his demeanour indicate a ponderous Victorian nomenclature (perchance)? Can you recall those lines from Shakespeare's King Lear?

Hold thy hand bloody Beadle

Why dost thou whip that whore?

Thou lusteth to use her in that kind

For which thou whipst her.

61

A noose seems to be hanging between the two of them; but, in a blur of motion or a trick of the light, these puppets appear to exchange places. All of a piece then – the Beadle finds himself hung from the wooden stage. His feet are both off the ground and the clean rope's been fixed around his neck. To which Punch cries aloud: 'that's the way to do it!'}

Act Two; Scene Three:

Sergeant O'Rourke: "Hello… once again."

Glock: “The Devil and all his legions of crocodiles (or dragons from Hell) are after me. They happened to be busily coming up from under the ground. Can’t you recognise my marshalling of the truth? For their agency or its retrieval is blood red in a ghoulish way; while it lists on towards a silhouette of darkened sludge… Was it really brownish to the tinge; and have you ever read a novel by Graham Masterton? Because here a naked woman’s form floats in the ether or out of all compass, and it’s withdrawn over the expectancy of her recumbent thighs. Yet all around her – or in terms of a necessary ligature – these experimental lays of the ‘brown’ coagulate and gather into a form. Nonetheless, each mouth champed off at a necessary bit or bite (sic), and each one came to be neglected in its fluidity (quite possibly). Did these heavy skulls become translucent; or otherwise mixed and melted together in their uncertainty?

Moreover, one eye could mushroom in a distended manner amid a river o’ teeth; or will it just dissemble o’er a vampiric longing?

Meanwhile, my veriest image hit pay-dirt; at least when hidden at the heart of a jig-saw piece dedicated to light-heartedness.

Might it turn out to be the ripe temperature of a dissonance which saw its hope lessening… or always glowing in bright pink? Yet still, I have to return to those basalt corridors that exist underneath the earth… Wherein various wild boar search for truffles in my hair and scalp, or seemingly adjacent to its individual strands. Would you be able to detect a rendezvous

here? Since such discharges or flames hint at a new leprosy… or they found themselves giving into a fluidity in the skin.”

Constable Smithers: “What nonsense you utter! You alone are responsible for your desires… good Glock. Give up such mendacity concerning the oneiric, I beg you. Instead, just consider this charnel house to be the onset of a new daybreak.

But we shall not be deceived again… for – in no way will we be provoked forth – sirens blaring.”

Glock (when further acting out the commensurate status of a dream…): “Have I come abreast of these beggar-monsters or suchlike cripples? Because the manufacture of Punch’s desperation lay aslant me – when way down or betwixt the height of these curtains – and lying askew on Brighton’s sands. Do you remember it at all? For this temple always has about it the look of a pavilion – albeit where a stream-lining due to gold gives way to some vermilion. Needless to say, its banks were steeped with an awning which occasionally pitched up by way of yellow-tored… and it was fluted at the top or surmounted avec a flag.

Won’t it be a Union jack? It swayed in the wind or rain, but otherwise remained static. Suddenly, and within this amphitheatre of misspent dreams, Punch bobs up once more…

yet isn’t he essentially looming up against a northern industrial landscape? Could it be pitched up in terms of its alliance with scrub-land and bush – particularly when drawn in photographic grey or sepia? Surely now, a misplaced eyelet or orb (one which was oval as regards its suggestion o’ whiteness) reared out of a black face-mask? Mightn’t we reminisce about a noir publication in the United States during the ‘thirties called Black Mask?

Again, it careered afore its face or lisp – and it just cut to the trace by way of so much affordable wire. For can the clockwork transparency of one ‘eye’ hide from the mechanism within?”

Death’s-head: “Punch has made good throughout this ordeal. He stands on the stage under some gloved awe – what with tassels 63

and bells attached to a pulley. His dress sense, though, remains the same: i.e., with a pair of goggling eyes, a pointy nose, a white ruff and some orange/green jester’s stripes. Are the latter attached to so many nine tailors – or a campanologist’s delight?

Enlivened now, by various candles (tall and red) which may or may not illuminate the scene… he finds himself arrayed with the Devil! They are fighting with one another – whilst Punch’s stick or wooden baton goes up and down on Mephistopheles’ head.

Whereas the latter glove-puppet fixates on a scarlet arrangement… one that's taken together with a fluted conch and a spear over its entrance. After all, he waxes a deep crimson or finds himself given over to an amplitude of taste. May he embolden a creature from the black lagoon – primarily by wearing a gas-mask or being vaguely reminiscent of Blaise Cendrar's text, Lice? Do you resuscitate its library card? It proved to be a memorable account of the Great War or the first european civil war… even though it comes across as very different to Celine's or Barbusse's record. Still, they fight in a blur of motion or an unparalleled flight; and it occurs within a slip-stream of identity which transfers onto video. Furthermore, we notice that the following tints: turquoise, earth brown, the colour of violent emerald and blood red – all of these find themselves carried over. Forsooth – only then do we see Punch clatter Lord Nick to the floor of the booth! He resultantly shrieks, gibbers and croaks in triumph: 'that's the way to do it!'

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Within this simulacrum of crimson or its flame, therefore, William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' lies prone and defeated.

Can it amount to the reversal of a mediaeval mystery play or its trajectory? Oh yes… For the Devil has been thrown down to the boards. He happens to be deceased – even kaput – cackles our Punch. A Gnostic touch is added here too; especially when the latter declares: 'Behold (!), now everyone's free to do what they want…'"

64

Sergeant O'Rourke: "Really? I don't reckon to that sound or its circumference myself…"

Glock (in the character of Punch – or by way of a broken witness): "Ha! Ha! Ha! He! He! He! My hands are untied forevermore; and they exist in celebration of Satan's defeat. Or, quite possibly, it's imbibed in another way… Yes?"

Constable Smithers: "But we still won't come out to rescue you, Glock. We think that you're lying – do you see?" (He speaks in a way which is

transverse directed, albeit when aslant his larger colleague. Both of them are dressed in a bold blue or serge.

O’Rourke remains seated throughout, however, and he seems to be smoking a fine cigar. It hails from the Dominican republic).

Act Two; Scene Four:

Death’s-head: <> ‘He’ speaks with a narrative thrust into his hand – one that’s rather like a spear! <>: “Yet again, your face becomes flabby or dissembles to a haloed red (withal). Can’t we intimate some sweat there; or are you all aglow with rivulets of pumice? Further, your quivering nostrils betray the fact that you may be genuinely afraid… primarily because Punch has reappeared within the topsy-turvy world of a withering asp. Is this performance tent or its livery o’ mayhem turned over, or does it sway in the breeze and ricochet to the side (even)? In its silent cinema, mon ami, we can see the huge doll’s head of Mister Punch listing to the west – at least within an aggressive or sepia-tinted moment. On he moves while swarming towards us; together with his arms held out before him or aslant, and his fists curled into tight balls. It’s as if he’s become a Neapolitan version of Odin, the all-father, who’s come out to play on the undulating grass… but then again, where is Fenris or the great wolf who will devour him at the end of days? Still, the morbid impermanence of his eye leaps out at us… at once looking frigid in its diameter of nothingness. Most especially, when a spartan landscape may be detected behind this scarecrow… one which merely freezes 65

our gaze away from those translucent fields. Had such an ebon mask been observed – reverse-ways – or with a white wire holding up the other side of its futile skin? For it occurred out here on May eve or the summer’s solstice, and usually behind the curtain at a village fete… together with such a blackened image staring out at you afore the clock. A few tokens of ivy float next to its case… do its big and little arms indicate a quarter to three?

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Immediately, Mister Punch pops up before us or thereafter. A purple cloth which was made from a comparable velvet swept to his rear; basically by covering up the inner recesses of a theatrical booth. Does he lisp over a closure or its issue –

particularly with his arms held across or in lieu of wooden staves

– never mind thespian extras!? His ruff seems to be grey in its chinese whiteness or any other gesture; plus avec more than a hint of green-and-gold wire in order to go with those goggling eyes. Remember now: he has just committed more murders than even his Professor can recall." (Note: a prof is the boffin whose hand controls Mr. Punch. But then, may anyone ever really master this errant Everyman?)

Glock (in terms of a soliloquy or its voice-over): "Come quickly!

You must save the soul of one who cares nothing for this life…

even if it just happens to be a gateway across the temperature of death. Because various bodies went to pieces out there in the night-sky; even though such rubiate star clusters twinkled like graves. All of these were limned in moonlight – or they moved out beyond the shuttered boards of my chalet-cum-shack. Are not booming or imponderable sounds to be heard reverberating near to my nakedness – at least in this phantasm or lustre? Also, those

'beasts' have slobbered all over us like spent carrion on ready rooftops… all the while superintending us with Comus' rout. Or might it be the victimhood of a new intensity? Most abundantly, when my axe or halberd had splintered the skull of one of these ghouls! Over and beyond 'it' went… at once circling the circumference of a magic circle out in the desert, a place where Choronzon found itself worsted. This must be irrespective of 66

Aleister Crowley's or Victor Neuberg's presence there… Yet the young woman's form reared on a proximate tomb – a Circe to my sleep. Is she blonde, nude and svelte, or in possession of a towering immensity of hair? None of which can be concealed by the green winding-sheet that this femme fatale displays about her.

Was Cleland’s Fanny Hill encumbered by such a glossary? It can’t really be Judy, but maybe it’s Pretty Polly?”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Hey, Glock! You do actually sound in trouble for once. We’ll be right over… never fear.” (Not long afterwards we find those police sirens starting up again).

Act Two; Scene Five:

Death’s-head (alternately now): “The police – after they have arrived in a manner that’s one plus another – kick in the shed’s door. Their legs are longitudinal to the shaping of these planes; each one basically adjoining its distaff side/eddy. Nonetheless, and to the advent of any such witness, Glock is left laughing in the entrance. His bald head carouses its own mayhem… and it’s merely japing to the spit. Each of the officers then stands in a light-blue doorway or its sound… but what of Punch? Does he leer on from the apex of a piece of clockwork machinery? A semblance or cornucopia of disorder (this is) which rescues some junk from tumble-down rooms. On top here – and by dint of any witness – we find a taxidermist’s bottles or phials, and the in-trays of so many specimens. May it all relate – no matter how subtly – to Damien Hirst’s artwork? Again, the locution of a thousand bottles needs splicing with whatever abruptness comes to hand (possibly). Likewise, do you detect the inner workings of Swiss watches here; wherein every one piles on the offering of its barometric pressure? Higgledy-piggledy these be; or they prove to be unconstrained in their witness statements. While each one festoons a gigantic or Goliath spider looking on aft; or maybe it’s just pursuant to junk’s gerrymandering!

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67

Yet Joey the Clown has reappeared on stage at this time, and he’s occasionally aggressive towards so many Victorian playthings.

He seems to be dappled with a test-card of estranged colours; the latter swimming before us like a medley or a liquorice assortment. Some sausages have been left out on the balsa wood, and this nearly always occurs ahead

of those screaming children of our imagination. They exist aslant of a purple curtain which wrestles venom (or even relief) from a distant sky. Must you declare a commitment to this act of trespass? ‘I’ve got a packet of pork scratchings’, opines Mister Punch. Suddenly, we notice that the crocodile is looming up from the back of our stage. It was possibly a dragon from long ago – i.e., way back in Porsini’s time or the dawn days, and it existed amid a land of giants in olden mists. Couldn’t a Nemedian chronicle be devoted to it?

Now the monster – who’s really a glove-puppet – glides forwards in a way that’s beholden to the hand which controls its sliding indent. Might it perceive the scarlet impediment of its ‘Eye’; or those sharp sabre-teeth which can wrestle it to the deck? Do they grab hold of such flesh as this (resultantly so)? Each green-jaw then closes around a cylindrical funnel; together with the bacon that’s already crackling in an imaginary pan. Whereas Punch and the Crocodile are competing for the attention of this pork – and they essentially vie over it to the left and right. Were they oblivious to the gaggle or crowd of children – at once hidden in the stalls – and who squeal with laughter at this onslaught? “Give me those porkers or gifts of an aberrant swine!”, squalls our Punch. For its part, the Crocodile remains speechless throughout.

It waxes too busy in consuming its porcine bilge; having risen up, and contained by an explaining arm, in order to embrace the recumbent lustre of so much green. ‘Release the bounty of such a sty! Didn’t the pigs rule an imaginary soviet in Animal Farm? I demand my sausages… naughty, naughty… NAUGHTY!’, screeches Punch. In summation, a puppet or an imaginary wolverine finds itself caught out and abruptly lying on its side.

What does he look like? Why, his nose seems to be pronounced, his orbs appear rather protuberant, and his lips were open in 68

order to reveal some wooden teeth. Doesn’t his bell-tipped cap hang down with a concentration of effort?

‘AAAAAAHHHHHH!’, cry all the children sentimentally.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “So you have tricked us again?”

Glock: “That’s right, my lads! But weren’t you already alienated from the familiarity of your misstatement? Yessum… for the nakedness of this skull often rears up ahead of one’s dawn. You see, a cobweb may have joined one’s enclosure despite your perspective… given the fact over whether the cold radiated out beyond my body. It testifies to nought save a stone compact (adjacently speaking). Were we really in a situation where the shack has exploded – thus sending its grief’s roundabout? Or might this be an uproar which had occurred from the ground’s lineaments or upwards? For, like a ruined piece of articulate sculpture, my neo-classic rest lies above the earth’s surface.

Could it resemble the withering destiny of Arno Breker’s shapes

– particularly when these have been smashed to shards by egalitarian troopers? Surely also, the cold sets in abreast of this weeping ether; the former reaching up to the Heavens as some fulsome steam…”

Constable Smithers: “Your fun is over, Glock. You will never manoeuvre our intentions towards such daemonic ludo again. We shall not come to a villain’s aid – no matter how convincing you sound in terms of terror or derangement.”

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Are you so resolved?”

Glock: “– Only to die…”

Constable Smithers: “– Irrespective of any justice…”

Glock: “No, morality… at least in aid of a ripe snake. I gainsay the poison of its fangs. Doesn’t a worm ouroborous exist at the bottom of a bottle of Scotch whiskey?”

69

Sergeant O’Rourke: “Reject this kindred of our days, my friend, since yonder life enjoins the modesty of cribbage… at least when it’s canvassing the perspective of lost fingers. True enough or nix… no caretaker can muster the strength to stand alone before a night-sheet’s impasse!”

Death’s-head: “He is at once solitary or lost, and he remains within the fastness of this adoration. Does he (Glock) sit there steeped in cold; and just wrapped around with the morality of a blanket? Still, a fire continues to burn before his knelt form; thereby giving out a semblance of heat – or is it the after-echo of a subdued witness (forevermore)? Snow and ice then banks up on either side of him; and this occurs primarily within the tundra of a misstated Blue… itself next to one burnt-out shack. All of which casts a shadow on nought but freezing air…”

Glock (as an aside): “Both of the patrolmen’s faces look rather hard now; and they edge towards the angular or the green in one’s declining light. May it interpret the spent abstraction of a candle which gutters on its table? Again, there comes into my mind the delirious tragi-comedy of Punch and Judy… In a drama where Mister Punch stands up (or out of a black-and-white silhouette) with the masked Hangman afore him. Will his body really be gibbeted after death – one wonders? ‘Rest easy, Punchy me boy’, says old blood ‘n’ bones, ‘you’ll have to be hanged from the neck three times until you’re properly dead! That’s deceased, cadaverous, rigor mortis, cut up a la William S.

Burroughs, et cetera… do you hear? You must perish once for love and twice over for filthy lucre, as well as finally in accord with that ol’ hurdy-gurdy music.”

Act Three; Scene One:

Glock is talking on his old ‘phone: “You have to high-tail it over here, officer, for I am in danger from a thousand staves… The creatures are all around me now – and they seem to be licensed by their necessary bites; together with a howling amid the snow 70

that drifts down from neighbouring peaks. Weren’t these lights out or covered o’er by candle snuffers? Most especially – given the illuminations which surround us; at least in terms of those icy rivulets or these icicles of wrath that festoon my beard. Might it rekindle an imaginary George V’s effort? Further, my long-standing mastodons approach me through the snow; and they’re merely abreast of one reflex as against another. Moreover – when one considers it – they span the horizon from left-to-right or under a

grey temperature. Let us look at this: since their gibbering forms were seen reflected in such flames, or they find themselves released via a fiery kindred. May it be the estimation of some flattened Greek fire? Still though, I am gathered in my scotch tartan or wrap, as the mob festoons or commences its targeted magnetism. Can this resemble the inner landscapes of Elias Canetti's text Crowds and Power? For these hominids gain a tundra of forgotten days out of all witness – and they are spotted howling by an emerald vestibule. Each tusk is then raised in ululation before an expectant mote; and yet for a brief second the climate grows warmer. It was almost as if the earth shifted ahead of an expectant sun! Mightn't it embolden a sea-green spheroid avaunt the tallest of these braves? Possibly so…

because each man-thing stood agape aslant the towering majesty of a new eclipse. Certainly, I came here asking for an escape within the mysterious affidavit of these forgotten towers. When just for a moment – to be sure – my mind goes blank and it becomes filled with images drawn from J.R.R. Tolkein's The Lord of the Rings (a trilogy). Aren't we prone to the onslaught of this new indifference? Against this, and around the circumference of our sky's angles, russet or verdant cumulus continues to gather. It fills one's conspectus with an exploding minstrel; primarily by way of looking up into the adventures of so many lit-up gyroscopes. Suddenly, it blossoms into the manufacture of nothing but light… and isn't even nano-technology restricted by light's wavelength? Can it be an expectation of death? Please forgive me – officers – you must come to my aid!"

71

Sergeant O'Rourke (who answers the 'phone on his own and without Constable Smithers): "Not on your nelly! We've had enough of your antics, boyo. Because your lies have called us forth on one too many occasions – and always without undue visitation by these spirits. You see, Seneca's children haven't been lost or otherwise abandoned in such a house of nothingness.

It's a manse o' hell or nullity a la Richard Matheson – do you comprehend?"

Death’s-head: “But truly, Glock was beyond all help from mortal hand now. Yes and no? For didn’t we leave Punch – his aberrant alter ego – wrestling with the crocodile on a puppet-theatre’s stage? ‘Give up those sausages, you swine!’, yelled our anti-hero.

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Punch still possesses a baton and he proceeds to batter the unholy croc with it. His paste-board offering or its brief thwacks the beast again and again… while such pork string-beans hang from its expectant lips. Could you detect those present fingers which lie slightly behind one’s gloves? Most abundantly – when they are wielded by the expert hand of a master puppeteer. Granted: Punch falls unexpectedly anew or abreast, and ‘he’ finds himself caught between the sabre-teethed jaws of the Croc. Is he dead (perchance); or just sleeping within the boards of this driven snow?

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The doctor pops up behind him at this time; if only to enquire whether such a cavalcade is dead or not. ‘Are you deceased, Mister Punch?’, asks the quack in an officious tone. ‘Yes’, comes back a tiny sepulchral voice from beyond a thousand graves.

‘Whether that be true or no’, chortles the medical man, ‘I have here the necessary remedy – namely, a bottle of physic.’ Could it be laudanum or opium drenched in alcohol, in order to adduce so many deluded dreams? While this particular M.D. – for his part –

happens to be a genuine snake-oil salesman. Most especially, when he finds himself characterised by a bald pate, a handle-bar moustache (white), and a crisp or black dress-suit. He also 72

possesses a criss-crossed balustrade – albeit in the form of a white tie, but not necessarily any tails. Punch remains expectantly attired in cap, bells, pointy shoes and striped jim-jams. He still lies prone on the stage.”

Glock (on a telephone for the final time): “You must help me out of this folly or its spendthrift agony!”

Sergeant O'Rourke: "By no means, your falsehoods go before you like so many fireflies which flit over a swamp's surface."

Glock: "But I'm not lying this time."

Sergeant O'Rourke: "Ah! So you admit your prior mendacity, do you? Begone Glock… Go Down Moses, in the words of a Nobel laureate like William Faulkner. Let us spy upon your retrieval in the dust! Why don't you fall forwards into the earth and take the Devil with you!? Moreover, won't the skeleton come up behind Mister Punch as a ghost or spectre, and in order to haunt him?

There are some who say, after all, that it's Judy's spirit – i.e., his one residue of conscience which follows him to the end. May it represent the journey of his own ghost train through its tunnel?

Anyway, you've had your last laugh Glock – you who have cried wolf, ghoul, monster and boggle once too often!"

Glock: "Who's CRYING?"

Death's-head: "After which the old-fashioned telephone line goes dead… whereupon Glock, the graveyard's caretaker, is abducted out of his shack by the side-door. (Wasn't this the one through which the two officers, O'Rourke and Smithers, had once entered?) He finds himself suitably escorted by the denizens of the cemetery. These are hob-goblins, dryads, ossuary mongers,

'things that go bump in the night', anti-gods, bad faeries, delinquent elves, negative pixies, zombies, mongrels, picnic cannibals and much else. Could they be revisiting Hecate or her 73

minions? Or were they (in turn) illustrative of a monster mash; possibly even an assembly of vampires? Didn't the Vikings choose to call their parliament a thing? To be quick about it: they crucified Glock's body next to some wood – at once head-down or in a bloodied wash – and under a full moon. The corpse was covered in liquid or a rheum's film; even over its well-creased hide and torment. Certainly, the warder's throat is out and it

pitched down the neck's side like a warbling giblet! Might it summon up one of those performance art pieces involving mutilation – and exhibited by Schwarzkogler in the 'seventies?

But such marginalia can be discounted now – since Glock remains stubbornly dead. Chief amongst his persecutors came Death's-head. He continued to wear the outside of a fossil's skull (plus antlers) over a lipless tare. Wasn't 'he' the robber-leader of such a gang even in soliloquy, then?"

Glock's corse finally sports a death's-head: "My lips are numb and blue. I am without residual life or animation. Yet beneath me lies Punch. He or 'it' comes to be slumped on the ground with goggling eyes… and our puppet's dressed in a reddish/yellow cuppa-soup! His small wooden hands were doubtless cast askew.

Likewise, a deep purple curtain grounds the stage of this glove's performance behind him. His body also seems to be surrounded by marbles which were grey-to-green-to-blue (sic). How do you do? Suddenly, and like news from nowhere, a familiar voice returns: 'that's the way to do it!' HA! HA! HA! HA! "

THE END

74

WE ARE WRATH'S CHILDREN!

An opera without soap

CHARACTERS: These happen to be Ancient Cramp (an aged millionaire), Teresa Mayhew-Phillips, his daughter, and their three step-sons or step-brothers. All of the latter are both middle-aged and require money desperately. Their names encompass the following demons: Arbuthnot Robinson, Crinkley Rage Ransom and Tiberius Hague-Ovant. A lawyer who has been retained by the family also makes an occasional appearance. His name can't help but be Montague Raitt. Likewise, a beautiful white cat known as Scrimp or Kaiser 'enjoys' a walk-on/walk-off part.

Wasn’t everything legitimate and above board now, yes?

ONE

Ancient Cramp: “Looking down from within the semblance of a dream – or possibly some form of crestfallen imagination – I am perceived to stand still. Could I be withered in my years (?) or otherwise bent over a yew-stick, when perspiring, and wearing a dark-blue suit. May this orgone tincture wilt as an agency’s resource or renewal…? Anyway, the disembodied semblance of such a face floats near to me. It must only enflame electrons or similar discharges from the dark-side. Does it really gyrate within a spectrum of deluded atoms? Also, will I ever be in a position to move my Bishop across the checker-board in order to annul it? Most certainly, it’s just those adventures into game theory that Willie Ryan outlined in Scientific Draughts.

+

Now then, the visage I’ve sketched causes itself to become subdued within some falling particles… each one of which belabours the prospect of a true ‘form’. Whereupon our atomic mask bears its teeth below the eye-sockets of some dead eye (coloured red); not to mention the crackling of sulphur. Further, this head can revolve silently or in its own ether; thence to reveal a kaleidoscope and any mutability out of hours. Or is it a belly-aching mixture of Kaos? A scene wherein some strange beasts –

whether multi-eyed behemoths or jagged-eyed Assyrians –

besport themselves. Some of these creatures are legless or wish they were so; while others signal the pineal eye on their forehead and it exists at the heart of a pressing insight. Might it be new –

or no? Again, the odd hippogriff or example of Moreau’s carrion (within this particular wrecking crew) paddles along on the ground like a porpoise… or alternately, some sort of deranged Hamlet. Doubtlessly, this assemblage was a manifestation of all my night fears – all of whom (to

personify them) radiated out from a central block. During the course of which, a great electronic medley surrounds my skull and it inundates the brain within. Every mouth then represents a cluster of molecules, fire, teeth, vacant orbs and misspent energies flashing roundabout.

How shall it indicate anything other than a nightmare's withering insistence?

+

Nevertheless – at the heart of this conundrum – variously familiar shapes become discernible to me. (No matter how far they may appear to be from our fire-storm!) I manifest myself at the stage's centre, to be sure. Am I not dressed in a dark-blue suit

– of a well-known cut – as formerly indicated? Yes… but surrounding me on every side are my children. Who else could they be in such a glass of hours? Well! First up to the mark comes my eldest step-son and his hair is red; it flames with the discharge of so many doubts… themselves unresolved. Whilst his features were coruscated or careworn – and this was usually over the ventilation of so much woe. Most of it, habitually, revolves around the concept of anger! (Whether it sneaks up on you as rather unbidden, surreptitious, defensive, round the houses, oblique or a performance in rodomontade). Most persuasively though, his livery is caricatured by that of a vulture.

For all of my children (with the sole exception of one of them) find the lower extremity of their bodies to be covered in feathers

– even some attendant wings. My good sir, are you free to engage in the furtherance of my dreams… whether or not they prove to be accompanied by their winglets? Moreover, each one 76

of my sprats (whether a direct or indirect off-spring) stands on a cylindrical pile of gold coins, Salvador Dali-like, that extends many times over their body height. Can we believe them to be birds of prey who're liable to wing it away on my booty? Or is this my accomplished progeny – irrespective of any Willed status?"

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “You betcha, daddy-o! But any status of ours as vultures won’t superintend these facts (no sir). Needless to say, we sit here perched on some endless columns of old, crinkly pound notes, silver dollars, sterling enquiries and divers gold bullion. Won’t you be able to hear it rustling in the long grass? Inevitably, we are yearning for the circumference of your death and wish to hasten the day on which it occurs. Die; die, die, die… you old rascal! Why don’t you perish and leave us all of your money? For don’t we recall the adroitness of Punch & Judy within this cavalcade of skin (?) – it capers out there on an iron stage.”

Arbuthnot Robinson (taking up his brother’s phantom argument with gusto): “A vaudeville wherein those glove-puppets glide into some sort of silhouette; at least in relation to each other’s fugue. Does one remember the racial delirium – now coming true

– of Christopher Priest’s science fiction novel, Fugue for a Darkening Island? Truly, the romanticism of its imperial measure never needs to doubt itself in such a torture chamber.

Again, Punch has mushroomed before the laurel wreath of his own plumage – and with the canopy of its red awning way out in front. Yellow and scarlet it was: plus we need to take note of a tambourine’s sound (somewhere) or in a distant splice. Do you count yourself ready over our foray? Since Mister Punch remains goggle-eyed, replete, under-utilised and ‘inhuman’ in a slightly mechanised way. Might he make a gesture roundabout the knees (?), primarily in terms of a dark-purple curtain that’s satin or folded. Was it touched (also) by a tincture of darksome blue-dye around the retina’s extremities? Surely now, Punch takes care of 77

a Baby handed to him by Judy – albeit maximising its screaming mouth or fulsome expenditure. Quod or because such an orifice remains well-rounded, bleating, on its knees before fate and reminiscent of Eisenstein at its best. Do you re-engage with that example of the cat-calling nurse, a la Bacon, in Battleship Potemkin? An illustration of Poussin’s Slaughter of the Innocents comes to mind…”

Ancient Cramp: “But what of my prior articulation – when dressed, as I am, in blue? Can’t you detect a wearisome quality about all of this? For I

continuously hold a stick underneath my moustache – do I not? May your company discern those groats aplenty – when set against the livery of so many piles of gold, themselves adjacently surrendered? They really summon up our one remaining skin or its pericarp. It happens to be a light green in its flavouring… while it seeks a pink shade to set fire to flies inside."

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "Death is the insistence of our entreaties, Daddy-o. For – if we're to be participants in your bleeding – I will lay many a bet over a game of solo whist. Most of these armatures can find themselves cut off at the wrist! Let's also remember what the Duke of Cornwall, that reluctant troubadour, shouted in King Lear: 'Out vile jelly, where is thy lustre now?'

(He happened to be blinding Gloucester at the time). Of course, we're referring to Shakespeare's Lear by the way – not Edward Bond's."

Arbuthnot Robinson: "All of which I was ventilating about Punch and Judy previously. Or, in the words of a professor, it concerns the tragi-comedy of Mister Punch… a performance inside which all other dramas have their place (if imprisoned by time). Will the celebration of Joseph Grimaldi – Britain's foremost clown – not take place on the first Sunday after January the 8th? It shall be superintended by the clowns' chaplain…"

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "Quite so! For Punch leers on with an expression of exhilaration… while his eyes almost seem to pop out of his wooden head. They look yonder or appear to be rather beady in their expectation of unhallowed fruit. Were they painted with some dithyrambs of intrigue; or did they bear upon their spots the basilisk stare of a lizard… but not an insect? Forget everything else now… especially by dint of the fact that the baby screams in close proximity to our anti-hero. It's in a situation where the planes of its face tilt onwards, and each Rendezvous with Rama makes up the plenitude of a new search for justice.

Nor can this be quickly forgotten! Since Grimaldi's legacy proves to be the cavalcade of an embittered future; especially given a child's high-pitched

and continuing whine. A playlet wherein its grooves became distended, sheer, possibly misinterpreted, and reminiscent of Balthus' mores in reverse.

Can you see it before you? Oh yes! 'Be silent', screeches Mister Punch in terms of a sibilant answer. 'WWWWAAAAHHHH!', continues the babe in an unabated fashion. Suddenly, Punch throws the child off the stage or its rampart, and it goes up and over the front of the portcullis… only then to rest on a semblance of these steps. Consider it again, my reconciling driftwood… for the infant is gone – if not discarded or dead – but not necessarily unburied. Still it lies at the front of the sea-side booth; albeit having fallen within a haze of darkling light. It helps to surround the mushroom of such a growth – primarily by merely suppressing its bawl, when flung aside or towards a bloodied gift of impermanence. You see, Judy's baby – unlike the other characters in this drama – happens to be a stick-puppet. That is, it's not one which's going to be held by hand…"

TWO

"Death makes ready our nuptial bed!" – Cassandra in Hector Berlioz's opera, The Trojans

Ancient Cramp: "So then – all of them are vultures who hunger for some abstract prey. This certainly accounts for three of my 79

step-sons: namely, Arbuthnot Robinson, Crinkley Rage Ransom and Tiberius Hague-Ovant. They all stand away from me severally and in a group – albeit busily watching or spying at the far end of the drawing-room… rather like escape artistes in relation to a gladiator's life-line. Perhaps one image amongst many others comes into my mind here – and this has to do with an armoured officer who faces off against a retinue of slaves.

They were low-life or rabble, and maybe they could be described as the residuum in terms of a civilisation's tasking. Almost suddenly – they are fired upon with a burst of flame-throwing energy, and it ceases to exist within a molten wall of fire. Does it reassemble – when side-by-side with such an entreaty – graphic novels like Battle, War and Commando…

themselves the progeny of IPC Thompson in Scotland? Anyway, one figure alone stands out amid this maelstrom or ‘holocaust’, and this involves some carnage occasioned by burning. Yes indeed… my reedy voice was heard to answer for the remainder. ‘Come into yonder cauldron, step-son’, it enjoins or bemoans. ‘Why don’t you step inside this threshold; if only to study yon dexterous preaching in such an oven? Surrender, my boy, and move forward…’ To which his opponent’s response remains eminently predictable. ‘Eat pay-dirt, Daddy-o’, snarls Arbuthnot Robinson

– while firing on this flaming torch with a pneumatic ray. (Even though the discharge proved to be too great – and it filibustered up into a blaze of spume, if already amongst atoms of some radioactive partiality). But the blast’s energy recoiled violently –

thereby rebounding from such a force-field and hitting him full in-front. ‘Damn it’, hisses one of my more distant relatives, ‘this whiplash strikes back in the form of a ricochet – it severs its own fortune, accordingly.’”

THREE

“I have no fear.” – Theseus in Sophocles’ Oedipus at Colunus

Teresa Mayhew-Phillips: “Here’s your sherry, my loving father.

May it be an illustration of Thomas Bright’s festival out Suffolk 80

way (?) and known as Cakes ‘n’ Ale. It is a beneficence that dates from February 1865 or more, and it has to amount to one of England’s oldest forms of charity. Nonetheless, the surrounding tables and books come to be dappled by a light green, or they’re occasioned by the purity of their surroundings in terms of décor.”

Ancient Cramp: “Mask-like (and somewhat life-like or otherwise decamped) my three step-sons stand to one side. Abreast of the foaming carpet (they are); whilst waiting or plotting for my inevitable demise with the severance of vultures. Let’s hear them chunter amongst themselves, or are they speculating upon destruction’s prospect? For each one of them bears about his visage the loathsomeness of a new asp; at once coiled

around the perfection of its Grecian head. Have you failed to observe that double sculpture – presumably by way of an introduction which looks to Harmodius and Aristogiton; or was originally by Critias and Nesiotes? Yessum…"

Crinkley Rage Ransom (off to one side and with a critical lisp):

"Look at her, will you? By Loki's spirit, the woman knows no bounds of either shamelessness or indecency."

Arbuthnot Robinson: "You speak of our step-sister, brother, who is not related to us by any ligatures of blood or spray?"

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "Yes, yes; of course I do, wolfling. Let us proceed to capture the generation of our spite like Sigyn, Loki's second wife, who stood above her husband in the bowels of the earth by making sure that the serpent's over-flowing poison scalded him not. I can't recall whether she used a silver or a pewter bowl for the delights of this relief. Mayhap you'll be able to detect some symmetry herein?"

Arbuthnot Robinson: "By involving our step-sister in the assault, you mean?"

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "Indisputably so… brethren. For, instead of allowing him to tire, she dotes on him and prolongs the worthless ingratitude of his life (thereby). Because the longer one's step-daddy lives – opportunity cost wise – the shorter will be our usage of his rightful gain. Certainly, one remembers a vision from long ago that's buried deep within the recesses of my mind. A mystery play wherein an undisciplined slave – or a member of the district proletariat – is brought before a regional governor. Was he bound up and trussed before the observance of his fate? In any event, the swine comes in… almost by creeping along the ground in a lowly manner: albeit with a recessed booth lying somewhere behind him. Doesn't it contain two pistols (or Lugers) which are taped back-to-back? But before he can either move or begin, a throwing-stick is launched at his skull with a sickening THWACK! Moreover, this champion – or veritable

hurling angel – then stands behind a teak desk that's impregnated with steel, mahogany and lapis. A myrmidon checks the miscreant in order to examine his pulse-rate at this time. 'Isn't our baseling kaput?', I ask in expectation. Yet what half-mask did his features really betray? Might it have been mine or my step-father's, or some other entity as yet unknown to me?

Perhaps we've both had the temerity to share fifty per cent of a visage each? (Even though at the back of my armoured form lay a shield – it nestled up against a rear wall). It refused the capture of any recess by an offerant other than me; and instead of this it stood out against a mural of some brilliant white. What did such a parable basically depict? Why, just try to think of an inversion of Labisse's Medusa – particularly when seen in a lithograph's guise. Or could it be the grimacing gesture of a frost or a hoar giant called Ymir… especially if held in place by a metal plate?"

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "Our worthy sister doesn't fool me for a moment, my brothers! After all, she only skivvies for him in the hope that he'll leave her more money in his Will. In such circumstances, charity just remains an expectation over future greed; as contained within a gesture of concupiscence. Do you 82

notice how she fashions his pipe, slippers, P.G. Wodehouse book and 'Bristol Cream'? Yes? Bah! It bears about its remit the rodent manufacture of so much deceit. Indeed, I would willingly skin her alive over a maintenance of bees! Don't necessarily hurry forwards towards any forgiveness or upkeep (no matter how unaccustomed)! Yet what of the reading material on his lap?

Could it essentially be a short tale by William Morris or Algernon Blackwood instead of a 'twenties humorist… perhaps it's a gothic tale by Ambrose Bierce? O troubled one, let me familiarise you with such asperity! For instance, our conqueror stands before a vestibule of burnished teak; if only to receive a computerised Rubik cube from an extended hand. Do you notice any difference here, Arbuthnot? Because our fingers always grasp the hazard of so much estrangement, in that the cuboid may well be a collective memory… or, quite possibly, its distant shrug. Maybe it really indicates the sovereignty of death! For behind him – and clamped to a revolving ring – are the bodies of six sprats… all of whom were wearing

masks. Perhaps they happen to be younger versions – or semblant chameleons – of our step-father, Young Man Cramp? They circle (somewhat simultaneously) on this magnetised dish… and each one of them proves to be indicative of a forgotten God. Can it – most persuasively – be the multiple agency of Balder, Od, Wieland, Bran, the Green Man and Mimi? Every one of whom refuses to be dressed in mediaeval chain-mail, like a crusader, but is much rather linked to some modern technology."

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "My brothers… the real point has to be to make him die! Certainly, he's old, timid, vanquished and lacking in imaginary resource. Isn't he just a ninety-three year old skeleton? Moreover, he stands between us and a billionaire's ransom. For each moment longer that he lives denies us the plenitude of our inheritance. Might we call him – in all transparency – a thief? Since this King Lear (or Canute) has placed his satin chair at the water's edge… primarily so as to order the waves not to inundate it. What folly, I ask you!

Remember now: each half hour which he survives cheats us out of a Willed compact or bargain, at least in terms of the funds that we are set to enjoy. Let's halt the clock, brethren, if it's pursuant to a time line's kill!"

FOUR

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "But we must never forget the fact that we've tried to kill him on divers occasions. You do recall those instances of steel (?); albeit with every item whimpering away to a forgotten dust. I merely recognise whether your dials are occasioned by one's grief, my siblings… even as you stand there, Arbuthnot, with your mouth open or withered to the chase."

Arbuthnot Robinson: "Assuredly, do we choose to remember a miasma or its plague of bats? A mystery play wherein a seething mob (or such a Comus rout) gathers around their step-father in gauntlets or mittens. All of them charge forwards in this mediaeval tourney; together with an assembly of cowls drawn up over their deluded faces. Do they come to register – when toothless over their gums – the brigandage which subsists in Carl

Orff’s Carmina Burana? They brandish sticks as they go – as well as holding fast to the press or bait, and they also howl at Young Man Cramp’s features when held in their misshapen grip.

Has he stayed behind in order to mask this raging fury; the kindred of which washes around Crinkley Ransom, his step-son, and revives a tidal wave? These malcontents – who are dressed in rags and holding staves – march Young Man over a fjord or its bridge. It has to conceal the ascent of its distemper with some purple; while drawing the garland of its hidden machinery below.

Is it not affixed, cabin-wise, within various rectangles of reinforced granite? Slowly now, the grunting and caterwauling of this mass recedes… because they have seized their prize; at once sovran of all pride and existing before a recognised star-gate. Yet our sibling, Rage Ransom, was left alone when adjacent to the clarion of such a voice… it calls out to him in the stillness, rather operatically. Does one register the conspectus of an abundant 84

fear? ‘Who are you?’, he hisses. ‘What do you require from the extremity of my lust?’ To which an answer is given by Teresa Mayhew-Phillips, his step-sister, with half of her face blanked out by a perspective in blue. A painted white line runs down fifty per cent of her visage (withal); plus her hair surges to a brilliant red – particularly when it’s compared to a green tunic beneath.

Did it actually betray a masculine cut, decidedly so? Moreover, can she be described as the Indo-Aryan or Hindu goddess, Sarasvati, who proves to be Brahma’s consort with white skin? A woman (this might be) who possesses a crescent moon on her forehead or brow, and she embodies the feminine side to all art, science, poetry and learning. ‘Why do you persecute your step-father?’, she asks in a high-pitched voice like a Khitian or monastic bell, itself reminiscent of falling pink lotus. ‘Hasn’t he showered you with every kindness of the golden cup?’, she mused aloud. ‘Assuredly’, replied the kneeling votary – whose scalp seems to be somewhat obscured by a serf’s cap; the latter being manufactured or woven from grey fleece. ‘But we stick to our reasons which exist beyond the reality of bone…’ ‘Avaunt thee!’, she cries in exasperation, ‘give to me their circular wit or its spontaneity’. ‘Well! He is alien to our blood and kind, in terms of a family

resemblance. Were he to blind us all with science and industry, or even nobility's knowledge… to us, he would amount to no more than a chamber-pot's draw'. 'I see. In such circumstances, then, your pelt rightly resists being tarred-and-feathered by this brush'. Whereas – when crawling away –

Crinkley Rage Ransom besports a mediaeval compress; i.e., this happens to be an ambit of servitude, expectancy, malicious cunning and root biology. After all, aren't most mortals the product of their genetics? Irrespective of all this, though, the slave of one elder-one spends a penny of its insouciance; as is evidenced by the high gods, or those ancient and shining ones."

FIVE

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "Yet tell us of those times in which you have failed to kill the oldie…"

85

Arbuthnot Robinson and Crinkley Rage Ransom speak together now, or in unison: "Indescribably so, my man, for the old goat has mitigated against our sense of pleasure. On one occasion, to be sure, we waited at a corner of the mansion's convexity; and this was irrespective of its frieze or ornamental pageantry. Why did we stand fast (?) in a situation where the bypass of memory has filtered it to a light blue… together with a border of shimmering black. Well! It was in order to crash down a loose cornice onto his head, at a time when the old fellow had the temerity to pass underneath us… while shambling along by way of his walking stick. Could it be made from a clean bit of yew?

Anyway, a few moments ahead of the impact he seemed to stumble… thus sending our missile shrieking a few feet away from its pay-dirt. Had the old codger been forewarned, then? Can it have been a mere slip of a snake's tongue (or his ankle) in the long grass? Would it be at all licit to attribute a sinister motive to it? Who knows? Besides this, our small white ball has missed its cavity in a life-game devoted to roulette…"

(Ancient Cramp is wearing a mask over his aged features. Does it recall a pterodactyl's front-end? Or alternatively, could it be a miniature Henry Moore sculpture – one in which a white quartz comes connected to the oldster's nose): "Nota bene, my step-children have attempted to murder me on several occasions –

each one of them guided by youth's impetuous nature. Yet every one eventuated in failure or in terms of absence's loss. Have I been strapped to this agency's fire-pits (?); or even other deep silos of grief – if only to end up smelling like the evaporated essence of the grey lotus. Do you refuse to see it all? For these power units indicate the fuel-cells of our future; and they were linked to liquid hydrogen or about to burst beyond Dunganess'

fiery pits. Gratuitously though, was I actually strapped to six cylindrical sticks of dynamite? Moreover, each one of them is linked to the others via a special ligature… a device that spirals about my body like an octopus. No matter how cloying this may seem to be… See now (!), how my children chunter amongst 86

themselves in relation to patricide. Are they not blinded by its conceit? 'Your demise has to be assured, Methuselah', declaims one with pride. While another exhorts the following: 'Death's lock demolishes the bones of ages! For haven't we been too squeamish to fully enjoy Alfred Hitchcock's The Birds?'

Nevertheless, my future execution can be viewed from a thousand angles – or it cascades out of a tunnel that's been dug deep into the loam, when pursuant to many a depth-charge.

'Let's drink to the old boy's fragments', chortles Arbuthnot, 'and our destined cash. You see, fortune smiles less on the brave than the most cunning'. Still, I refuse to give up the ghost and drop short, however. All of which tempts my 'off-spring' to a new dosage of chagrin – just look at them now! Because resultantly, when a hooded official inspects my coffer with a robot in attendance, he enquires: 'is the old'un dead?' To this the answer has to be a resounding: NNNNNNNNOOOOOOOO! But wait a moment, wasn't my body sent plummeting to the atmosphere's surface by some gliding wraiths? All of whom hope that it will explode or otherwise shrivel

up; particularly when it comes into contact with the other's envelope. Surely there can be no release as yet? Yes indeed; since I have escaped without prior blemish or blame, and am unloaded as regards an omelette's eggs. What did George Bernard Shaw say about those two evident commodities?

+

Again, my corse has to be held aloft by twin staves – one of them able to support this ragamuffin with the other. Below all of them a crowd – or an aggressive jamboree – has chosen to gather. Are they the carnival retinue who might mushroom at the gibbet, or in relation to one's Circus Flavius? Nonetheless, one peon amongst many stands thoughtfully capped – he's sucking on a straw in his mouth at the time. 'May the old one happen to be a master of escapology – like Houdini?', he muttered under his breath. 'Yet again', his neighbour averred in kind, 'I have heard it said many multiples of his co-exist, each of 'em identical to t'other down to their nethermost atoms'. Had Parminedes thought of this intervention in ancient Greece? 'I don't doubt it', 87

I replied; at least when standing next to my bear-skinned ally in disguise. Who can actually determine the dimensions of a new mediaeval jerkin these days?

SIX

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "Didn't I also try to get rid of the old caterpillar with some poison? You know, it involved that purple bottle with a sulphureous compound inside; i.e., the one with a skull-and-cross-bones on an outside label. Anyway, I laid it down for my master's provender and by way of his evening tipple – but that very night he fed it to the cat. Do you remember the handsome brave or feline called Kaiser? His was a masterful presence (indeed) with a sleek white coat and a magenta collar around its neck. Yet now, he lay dead on the carpet avec his finely chiselled head tilted slightly to the left. Did it embody the effigy of an Egyptian deity, thereby? Still – and amid an azure effulgence – Arbuthnot looked on through a crack in the dining-room door. Yes indeed, the old felon (more an example of Grendel's father than his mother) mumbled to himself; and he happened to

be stooped as well as pyjama-clad. He uttered the remaining ditty: ‘Scrimp, old fellow, are you well? What ails thee, boy? Is the ‘Bristol Cream’ not to your grape-guzzling tilt?

Calamity Jane! Old Kaiser – when descended from some Prussian blue – happens to be stone cold sober. He’s dead, deceased, kaput… and without any beautiful plumage whatsoever’.”

Ancient Cramp: “Yes, alrighty! Each of my three step-sons –

when flushed with impatience and goaded by bullion – has attempted to kill me. For am I going to meet my daughter, Teresa, on some accentuated and rectilinear ground (?); the latter rather adrift from a dream’s circumference. Hail, daughter…

after the fashion of those Praetorians in ancient Rome who greet one another in this fashion. Are you a mistress of such retrieved elements (?); particularly when you’re found to be a witness to the truth’s sensuality.”

88

Teresa Mayhew-Phillips: “Let our hands grasp each other, my beloved father, in a compact of steel. Is our gesture to be one of renewal – whether in the manner of four muskateers – or under the temperature of a new dawn? Can my three step-brothers really wish to start a war by your assassination… even if this suggestion only exists within the reptilian stems of their brains? I must atone for my abandonment of this desolate place; especially when it comes to be curdled in its barrenness. Were we right to call it Golgotha yesterday (?); namely, the mount which was named after the cavities of a skull. But, if adjacent to the surging capacities of an electric storm, I shall leave you now. Allow me to vacate this volcanic islet in a magic chair that carries me aloft of any wondrous import. Fare you well, father!”

Ancient Cramp replies: “Fare you well, daughter!”

SEVEN

Ancient Cramp happens to be smarting under a new locution or its identity. “What are yonder vultures chuntering on about now?

May you be planning various ways through which I could be despatched? Like the last time, any impediment to your Colossus of Rhodes’ expectation will have to fail. It is altogether overheated. Moreover, I have more than espied this avalanche of a great stone; and the former has no option but to cascade out of

‘our’ sky. Might it reminisce about a flaming meteor, thereafter?”

These malefic step-sons then speak in unison: “Oh no sir, by no means… since we are unable to spy the portent of your dagger.

Why, we were just commenting – amongst ourselves – about how well you looked today. Can you then prove to be apparelled in these delicate tones of age? It’s hardly an exercise in what Thomas Carlyle would have called the jeunesse doree, but still…”

Arbuthnot Robinson: “Do you see or credit it? It remains as I have always indicated; especially when it’s succulent over a new 89

abattoir’s sluice or relief. Anyway, the placement of such a grave would often rely on a ‘raptor’s caution.”

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “Yes. Charles Manson’s toe-nails have got lost in this particular biscuit splicer… I agree. The old termagant has eyes and ears that miss very little or nothing at all, contrary to one’s wilfulness or fate.”

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: “My brothers, can’t you see a dais which contrives to surround us all on this plateau? Again, a remit that’s given over to scarlet reverberates aslant our senses. Look you!

The gates on this circle of brick have been opened up, even though mass-gravity atoms crush everything to the level of one’s floor. Now: let a personification of us all – when dressed in a green leotard – move onwards and outwards. He is surrounded by the debris of some outraged rock on every side. Suddenly, a version of Teresa Mayhew-Phillips appears next to

him; and she’s ten-foot tall & clothed in blue lycra. Farther on, we find our step-father – when disabled by age and in an advanced bath-chair

– hovering above the horizon. Between them a tube which enables one to skip between dimensions (sic) comes to operate in a territory between father and daughter. ‘Let’s seek to escape’, trills Teresa, ‘through the actions of an articulate renegade! Do you augment such a fury with the crackling of some lightning?

Since a new figure emerges in this particular hellstorm – or is it really a maze of threshed beginnings? Such a deity has to be at least twelve feet tall; as well as being armoured, booted, congealed or with a portcullis for a skull. May ‘he’ actually incarnate a male version of Freya; the lover of cats? All of which causes him to wear a mask after the fashion of either Skrimp or Kaiser. Can we detect in him the personhood of these three (?); or an otherwise delinquent band of brothers. Wherein their negative side was brought out and liberated with Loki’s spirit – if not fastened onto Mesmer’s magnetism. Listen to this spiel, my brother-in-arms! Does one not characterise him – amid such hippographs as these – as the prince of lies?”

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Tiberius (continued…): “Behold, O ye ill-omened ones, the mastery of your murderous fortune! Slay the old wretch without a second’s thought! Kill your step-father, Ancient Cramp! Come into the ripeness of its aftertaste (perchance) or its putrid reckoning! Stay behind only to destroy yourselves in a Chaldean crucible – prior to the reconstitution of diverse forms! Think solely of abundant gain, my brave champions! Is human or mortal sacrifice – within certain prescribed boundaries – just a transmutation or a disabusing of energy? Peel back these dark ones – or various hybrids of a gibbon and Hanuman – in order to prolong a final gasp’s trajectory!”

Teresa Mayhew-Phillips (if speaking out of her own symbolism):

“Hasten, may he attempt to rise in accordance with varied types of lucid dreaming? Was his prologue merely found to be rooted on death’s other side? Surely, warriors such as ourselves can only speak of an exo-skeleton… that is, a structure which alone rises out of kilter with a necessary deed? For might individuality be a curse as regards homo sapiens’ future? Truly, no-one really knows – but perhaps we may take up an illustration from Count Maurice de Maeterlinck’s The Life of Bees? A minor scene whereby the function of the whole is reduced to the one, and this was irrespective of my inclinations in the matter. Since – in an amphitheatre so composed – the bees lie in rows, aslant one another, or in myriad and tiered layers. Oh yes. All of them are lacquered in a vestment of purple; if pursuant to the succour of their Queen’s milk. ‘Let me be at liberty to unfold my destiny’, cries my step-fellow’s essence. After which – he hurls himself down a dimensional tube that exists between planes or seems to be redundant over its resource. Finally, he disappears into the ether or towards some wisps of faint blue-tubing; and even the other figurines, such as Teresa and her father, follow suit. Were they all to be the ready chroniclers of a new Ymir? ‘Soon you will control our minds – along with all the rest of the citizenry’, each character embroiders in turn. But this brothers’ collective 91

karma just stands there; albeit with ‘its’ arms crossed on a metal breast-plate. ‘It’s so true, my relatives of distance, since I intend to shut this globe off to all life save my veriest Will’.

EIGHT

Teresa Mayhew-Phillips has been brought down to earth by these developments: “I had originally sat reading to my father against a purview of yellow; together with a grand piano which proves to be set up in the background. A roll of sheet music or a piano-roll lay atop it. What may it have been? It could possibly amount to Bartok or Kodaly; but it was more than likely to relate to the British school of Walton, Smythe, Ireland, Bax, Vaughan-Williams, Britten, Mathias, Birtwhistle and Maxwell-Davies…

These were the names in this particular frame. My three vulture step-brothers stood off at a distance (withal). Each one of them had their hands in their pockets; and they also chose to wear suits of sandy brown, emerald

and other earth-tones. Whilst their entire demeanour – when set off against a magenta backdrop –

proved to be sullen, in-drawn, envious, plotting and resentful."

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "The time for procrastination now falls fallow from my hand, brothers. Heed the umbrage of some forsaken skin – why don't you? Does one recall having read in one's youth the Edgar Allan Poe story Some Words with a Mummy? Well(!), murder merely retracts itself from the stick-fingers on this special mitten. For each and every digit, then, militates against some customised frenzy… but it also occasions stealth. Oh yes, my brethren, do you choose to weigh my character's necessary drift? For tonight our Grand Old Man or fake Gladstone bag must die. I am truly desperate for money. He will have to perish as a consequence. Remember this: no other substitute comes to life in this sulphuric acid's potency. Video meliora proboque, deteriora sequor!"

(We now enjoy the detour of a brief director's cut…

Furthermore, all of the above words were delivered sotto voce 92

and off to one side. They cannot be overheard; leastwise not by the intended target of their venom. Throughout the delivery of all of this spleen, however, an enormous and armoured effigy stands alone. It illustrates an Assyrian sculpture or compress; at once massive, lock-jawed, lugubrious and solitary in its cask. May it constellate our step-brethren – when smelted down or askew –

and shifted aft in a negative direction?)

NINE

Ancient Cramp now exists from a position somewhere above his pillow: "Crinkley Rage Ransom, my eldest step-son, tip-toes into my lofty bedroom at just after three in the morning. Has an ormolu clock struck three bells someplace else, and maybe in an adjacent hallway or its niche? No matter… because a pale tincture of moonlight – itself of an exquisitely fine blue – fills up the lower features of this floor. It also seeks to delineate an

untroubled edifice or its silence; whereas a delicate green-tint washes these abundant walls and their ceiling. All of which discloses those books and pictures contained within – a Stubbs here or a Thackeray there (perchance). My step-son (who I inherited from my second marriage) introduced himself slowly, and he sidled up to a wall when in possession of a black spider's sword or fang. Might it be a poniard for killing in milady's chamber (?); albeit one that's been cast in wrought gilt. Anyway, he intends to commit a murder this night – so much has become blatantly obvious. Is he at all circumscribed by the fury of Macha; the crone or dryad of death in Celtic mythology? Most particularly, when we summon up her status as the queen of annihilation – almost after the prow head of the White Lady as it cuts through our silvery waters. May this incarnate the principle of Morgan la Fey; a supreme war goddess and pale Kali who goes abroad fully armed with two spear-points? Still, in an early representation she has been cast on a bullet-stone, with the head of an owl mulcted over its crest (as a diction) and oblivious to all harm. Does she also carry about her oval the armoury of two breasts (?); at least when rested in terms of an armature or its 93

crescent… or otherwise keening towards a wheedling pumice.

Effectively now, can one spy on it further – in relation to what the author John Cowper Powys called Aboriginal Cymric?

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Again, his face loomed or leered over my sleeping pallor. How might we effectively characterise it? Well!, it appears to be twisted, bent, furtive and all-aglow. Whereupon the light coming from a bedside table seems to illuminate it from below –

especially given some sort of pale fashion or response. For hasn't a combination of fear, odium and avarice transformed it into a disfiguring mask? Maybe my glassy eyes can still apprehend it on their toasted retinas, as they look upwards with a laugh?

Moreover, was Colin Wilson really correct – in his Encyclopaedia of Murder – when he spoke about the murderer's imprint being left on the victim's eye-ball? (No matter how residually this might prove to be…)

Anyway, Crinkley’s visage must ransom its fate before some heathen gods… especially when we consider his flared nostrils, beetling brows, bulging eyes, mud-guard ears, flaming red-hair and grinding teeth. Truly, in the words of the Authorised Version of 1611, there will be a wailing and a gnashing of molars for those who inhabit this outer darkness? Do they actually characterise A Mask of Amontillado(*)? (*Note: the latter is a short story by Edgar Allan Poe). Behind him curled up the ready filigree of so much green; the former becoming occasioned by either dollops or spirals. Yet behold now… the death-dealing plunge of his tulwar knows pause for a few flashier seconds. Why? What is it? By Hades’

daemons, why does the cypress of this impediment fall through the floor of its catacombs? Does one detect a detergent – or even a bleach – before one’s veriest heart? Indeed, the peradventure of Fuseli comes most readily to mind… Most especially, when an etheric Macbeth emerges from Duncan’s bed-chamber, daggers in hand, only to be met by the brochure of a Medusean wife.

Remember Felix Labisse; or might he be a Nemedian free companion a la Robert E. Howard?”

94

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “Great Scott… the old scythe’s already past his or its ‘sale by’ date. He’s died this very night (you see) and there’s no necessity to stab him now with my knife. Nor do I need to scare him into having a coronary – my residual plan of campaign. For, under the tableau of a finishing blue square, old grandfather time lies dead in his pyjamas – or on what is presumed to be an occasional dais… All of it takes place afore the rampart of one’s kitchen skewer; if serenaded to one’s necessary end: and casting a penumbra on these special sheets.

Hooray, hooray… ‘ageism’ trumps every card (thereby) and the weak go down beneath one’s whetted blade. What a splendid day

– all praise to the celebration of Mammon! Mithras rules over this plenitude or hour! Do we need to sing a reverse stave, in mediaeval Latin, to Ahriman? Behold our black sun…

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But what of Punch and Judy, I hear you ask? I beseech you, since Mister Punch has entered this puppet theatre from its stage-right.

Further, the purple folds of some curtains exist behind his goggle-eyed immensity – with the only other character on stage happening to be Judy. She comes across to him, wearing a bonnet, and plus the child in her arms. AAAHH(!), is that right?

Punch spies the babe under his jester's cap; avec the hooked nose, the manic grin and those revolving orbs. For might 'he' be a variant on the theme of a man who smiles without mirth?

Surely the Baby – the only stick-puppet in the show – cries out in a wheedling, high-pitched manner? May it be redolent of Alan Ginsberg's decadent poem, Howl? Nonetheless, and with amazing finality, Punch brutally chucks the infant out of the window… in fact, it's hurled off the front of the stage. Yes! The fledgling falls – open-mouthed – and with a whirring whine rather like an autogyro's rotor-blades. It seems to descend – or otherwise descant – in darkness; if only to spiral with bloodied lips upon those hard stones that're occasioned by shadow. Could it reassemble an O without a figure (?); at least as regards the diction of Lear's itinerant Fool. Or maybe it will incarnate one of Bacon's mouths (?) – itself out of kilter with the puppet's orbit; 95

or otherwise redolent of Eisenstein's nurse when screaming on those Odessa steps of yesteryear. In any event, this stick figurine lies prone, exhausted, lifeless and trapped. It subsists out there on one of J.G. Ballard's terminal beaches, constructed with pebbles, and refusing to furnish an echo to its cry. Is it so?"

TEN

Ancient Cramp: "Behold, I am dead – yet life's gift of language echoes on in my available corse. I also have the ability to look down on my children's antics, as my step-sons' ransack the bedroom looking for the Will… Such impatience, to be sure…

Yet my perspective on everything seems vastly distinct up here on the astral plane… What peace, now that all turbulence has ended! Quiet, let us await developments. Can you hear that they are talking – dead men upright – one to another? Listen…"

Arbuthnot Robinson: "Where did he put the blamed thing?"

Tiberius Hague Ovant: "Search me."

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "It has to be here, I tell you. She always told me he kept it hidden in this very bureau… or down on the left. Aha, I have it!"

Ancient Cramp<<vaguely, in a sort of dream-like transport after death>>: "Yes, the three of them procure (after a somewhat egregious default) my Last Will & Testament. Yet what shall it profit them? Whomsoever gaineth untold riches but loses contact with reality may find everything dissolving around them. Who could have uttered that phrase long ago? I forget. Anyway, look at their characters now – aren't they convulsed with greed?"

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For do we spy a procession coming closer here? Wherein a horde of bestial guards who are armed with staves await their progeny.

All of them were arrayed with sticks – some of which have fluorescent skulls at their end. They glow in the half darkness 96

roundabout… whilst over the entire proceedings an enormous sculpture stands guard. It looms over a turquoise discharge of smoke or brackish incense; and the wisps of Hephaestus' forge inundate this valley with a new glow! Assuredly, does it revalue the Colossus of Rhodes? No-one really knows – since these wonders of the ancient world have not survived, if only to reconnoitre a modern template. Touché! Now these young orphans (or my heedless step-children) are bodied forth… and they essentially emerge from the underside of a dirigible or a zeppelin. They fall over one another, scrap, flap and were all a'feared – as they're 'run' to the barracks without a shred of mercy or pity. Hello, what is this? A woman is observed to be coming across the tundra… May it actually turn into Teresa Mayhew-

Phillips (?), who's busily sporting a cloak around her lycra vestments. Could this shroud come to represent a toga, instead? In any event, she has two great mastiffs alongside her; and each one of them enables us to reminisce about a Conan Doyle story (thereby). Moreover, her appearance has subtly changed in a way that's difficult to register. For she looks older, sterner and less running to any sort of resource than hitherto.

No… in answer to an unbidden question, her skin was neither looser or tighter than heretofore… in that it remained unflayed.

While the visage kept up an air which seems altogether unflappable, taut, wire-like or given over to a necessary stricture.

Her hair – too – signals a distinct difference in ways and means.

It's no longer bottle blonde or peroxided (you see); and it has become shiny, blanched, white at base, rinsed out, empurpled –

but ultimately blue. Does anyone care to notice it, my pets? Ha!

Ha! Ho! Ho! How definitely these worms have turned roundabout… She turns to address a nearby harasser, a personage who looks suspiciously like myself. Can you detect any similarity to my unvisored past – when free of a fifteenth century helmet? 'See to their persecution, paterfamilias', she muses to herself. 'You spare the rod of discipline only to endanger the child. Verily, all punishment and pain is a portent of learning.

For your information, the conjugation of Latin verbs will 97

basically occur with one's thumb-screws on… Yessum.

(Leastwise, if we were to utilise this little exercise as a metaphor for life). Boot the little tyke on his way, hoon! Doesn't he bear a striking resemblance – albeit with half a face-mask missing – to a young Arbuthnot, sire?'"

ELEVEN

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: “Take a gander at this, I tell you! Why don’t you just retina regard it (?); it says a Last Will & Testament, I ask you. Here, examine this particular codicil or act of spite. He’s left no money to us at all, my brethren. Every last bit of it has been bequeathed to CHARITY(!)… that’s right. For the old fossil’s umbrage knew no bounds whatsoever at the thought of our loss.”

Arbuthnot Robinson: “It’s frightful… irrefragable, without conscience and lacking in family dignity… do you hear?”

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “Old grandfather time – or our nethermost Methuselah – must have been soft in the head when he drew up the Will. We’ll be duty bound to test it through the courts – regardless of any expense involved. First off, let’s contact the family’s lawyer or shyster known as Montague Raitt.”

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Also, doesn’t it embody or counteract one of those circumstances in Punch & Judy? Whereupon – and after the Baby has been thrown off the stage – Judy returns on the right side of our booth’s amplitude. ‘What hast thou done with our babe?’, she whines on. Her reedy voice comes over tremulously or quaveringly; while the female’s little wooden hands shake.

Meanwhile, Punch prefers to bob up and down between-times –

whilst contriving to hold out some digits made from balsa. He almost teases those children gathered before him on the sea-front

– by virtue of his presence. They sit roundabout or in a hemicycle, and they nervously finger their ice-creams, when they 98

find themselves abreast of a gaudy red-and-yellow awning. Does it continue to flap in the wind, aplenty? For, like a character in some spasmodic Dada by Duchamp, Punch’s orbs seem to revolve in their sockets. Might our author prove to be an unfunny vulgarian like Will Self? Anyway, he gave his young audience a toothy grin. ‘You see, my young sirs and madams, one’s water-baby happens to be asleep… isn’t it so?’, he coos. His arms are

then held our reverse-ways; or possibly in terms of some supplication or other. Suddenly, Judy screams out loud and by way of an arrested response. ‘You’ve murdered him… you nasty, beastly old man. For whatever fashion brooks our reverse imp.

He’s gone, been scragged and is kaput – you do detect this truth, don’t you… boys and girls, mums and dads? Why don’t you rekindle your moral seismograph… here and now, my worthy commons? Didn’t he strive to commit infanticide; a felony which is far worse than self-harm or felo da se… in and of itself? ‘Yes, oui, si, ja, da…’, out-sources or pours our combined youngsters.

But Mister Punch (for his part) remains unfazed by such a maudlin commotion or its blast. ‘You wicked, deviant tellers of tales’, he lambasts his immature audience of ‘famous fives’, and he continuously points at them during this ordeal. Because for him now, the indeterminate semiotic of Paul de Mann’s Blindness and Insight holds sway in this maelstrom. Nonetheless, Judy responds by letting out the following remarks – especially when she’s right next door to a purple curtain. ‘You’re naughty… Mister Punch; you’ve been very, very bad… and I’m never going to kiss you again’. (Could this possibly be a synonym for sex, perchance?) Punch then begins to beat her with a very large stick which he’d brought on stage for this. WHACK!

Do they begin to wrestle with one another, albeit within a whirligig of force? And so, like Dickie Davis’ ‘World of Sport’

on Saturday afternoon’s ITV during the ‘seventies, this wrestling bout continues. Blow is presumably traded for blow amid various tram-lines of energy; and each one radiates out from the other’s colours or spectrum. Look at it, my masters! Resultantly so, a flashdance of speed, lotion or motion (and whatever else) thence 99

contrives to inundate our Whole. A thwack and thwain – or its threnody of available motion – then superintends. Finally, and like the nanny called Sandra Rivett who was beaten to death in the basement by Lord Lucan… Judy flops over onto our miniscule stage. Flip… she’s a goner; rather like a character in Thomas Pynchon’s Gravity’s Rainbow. In relation to which –

Punch first responds by placing his wooden hand over the underside of his face. Therein, he starts to ruthlessly upbraid the audience – primarily by joining in the fun and laughing uproariously. HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! HA! He's not alone in his inhuman jape either… hee; hee. May he really have occasion to bob, bib and tuck across from such a crowd?

Percussively, a cry can now be heard; it ventilates itself from amidst his swatchel's mechanical gyp. 'That's the way to it!', he enjoins in way which is possibly pronounced all as one word.

'That's-the-way-to-do-it!'"

Arbuthnot Robinson: "Our sister, Teresa Mayhew-Phillips, has momentarily turned up."

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "Like a bad penny, you mean?" (Note: this latter remark was delivered in a hoarse whisper or off to one side…)

TWELVE

Ancient Cramp<<He's cast up from beyond the grave (no matter how residually) and by way of a yellowish glow. Mightn't it actually be an example of some bleached titanium?>>: "My three vulture step-sons then proceed to inform my daughter about the Will's verities. They do so in a curt, waspish and unapologetic manner. Isn't it altogether typical of their boorish mien? No matter what else may be fashionable… ergo, an image of some despondency filters into one's mind or phrenology, and this is despite the inevitable translucence given to my demise. For up here – in one's astral body – everything appears to be so much more distant, ethereal and abstracted. But the revelation that I see 100

above me is more than real enough… since here, the gloved hand of one possibly aged individual or dot, obtrudes from a neighbouring wall. It steams slightly with the relic of so much folly or latent fog. Can these outstretched, muscular digits come to exemplify anyone's meat? Or is the young individual who stands ahead of me – when armoured and shaven-headed – just looking askance at aught for no good reason whatsoever? Does it hark back to the early designs of Francis Bacon; or even those of his

help-meet Roi de Maistre? Yet let us forsake our former identity from behind a multiplicity of masks. Has one ever read Wyndham Lewis' manual known as The Code of a Herdsman?

Arbuthnot Robinson then intrudes into this heady admixture; he's much younger now, as well as possessing an anti-gravity device hidden under a fluorescent helmet. Moreover, this head-piece has a skull-and-cross-bones attached to it… and it's limited to some rather crude paint. Whereas our former skin-head (by way of a necessary accompaniment) bears a striking resemblance to Crinkley Rage Ransom… even if 'it' just betokens adolescent goose-flesh. Tiberius Hague-Ovant, though, incarnates a chalk-mark of progress; at least as it exists under a serf's bonnet or catch. Certainly, he fiddles with a mystic rubik cube only a millimetre high; while contriving to snarl all the while. 'Why doesn't it work, Cramp, answer me that? Aren't you supposed to be the mage of all possible Mages? Isn't that how you've made your necessary or abundant bullion… the latter fit for us to inherit?' 'It doesn't begin to supply the answers because you won't do so, step-son. What is there about yon that can't compute, eh?' 'Forbear from handing me riddles on a silver platter, Daddy-o. For yonder rats seem only fit to suck up detritus from each proboscis'. 'One question', asks a teenage Crinkley rather arrogantly, 'explain this girl's value, can you? She merely stares into a cuboid or G3 mobile, and mimes some dancing games. Can't she be aware of the eroticism of such a feat – as her aura manifests those recumbent visions or anxieties? Do you choose to resuscitate the phrase Rex Vivant – i.e., lord and master of the dance; thereby making it feminine in its travail? Answer 101

me…!' 'Your step-sister's thoughts coach or tease out some pure beauty… imagine that. Surely she may be defined as a Cordelia to Edmund's bastardy? Poor, brave Teresa – since she's trying to survive with her inner fortitude of love on an otherwise devastated planet'. I then reach forward in order to stroke my daughter's hair. It proved to be darker or almost brunette in her youth, although it later turned a fine tint of amber or blonde.

'Dance Teresa – rather like Claudia-Minne Boyle of Ballet Rambert – and cast off all inhibition in consequence, just turn & twist about. No-one shall punish you this time – for we'd enjoy spying or watching your tarantella.

With you crossing the boards, my dear, no voluntary cascade of von Laban's happens to be dead. No dodos can be imagined to subsist here'. She rises to one side of us – at once crisply over the moon's spring in lieu of Hecate – but in a way that's surplus to her dogs' requirements.

Look… her arms are raised above her shoulders; and they wax un-dormant, poised or sweeping. 'Truly', I announce with fervour, 'her limbs have become the branches of Life's tree!'

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Do you remember a story by Algernon Blackwood entitled The Man who Loved Trees? A narrative within which it became immoral to lop off or curtail an oak… Listen now: quod she approaches my dead ear on the left, if only to whisper…"

Teresa-Mayhew-Phillips pipes up: "About leaving the entire bequest to charity; you know that I approve. I'm proud of you, Dad, I'm all made up." (As she speaks these mumbled words in a low tone, some tears of salt-water trickle down her face).

THIRTEEN

Ancient Cramp gazes down from on high: "My funeral takes place within a week of these events. After all, I had died of old age and no autopsy was required. Each and every one of my clan and kin (sic) then gathered around my bier; it all came to be clothed in some lightish rain or with a pale blue pigment infusing the scene. Are you aware of its casual witness statement, O

viewer? For such an evident ooze dashed aught before it; whilst a slightly dull Anglican cleric puttered on. Moreover, it became apparent whether gusts of air or water were sweeping around one; yet none of my step-children looks to be present. Behind some black or calf gloves, even amid many a muted whispering at the service, their absence is discussed. (Even though my beloved daughter, Teresa, from my first marriage… oh yes, she

has put in an appearance. I would have expected nought else from her. Does she catch a striking glance or eye – together with her delicate fur hat and matching wrap? Most definitely, Teresa Mayhew-Phillips cries throughout the entire proceedings or their dirge, and she dabs her face with a dainty tissue… What a trooper, eh? My sweetheart's still faithful – or accordingly loyal

– right up to the end. I must bless her heart, indisputably so. But my three vulture step-sons remain amiss… They have flown the coop, or are feeding on other carrion and prey in a blasted tree's stump."

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An illustration from Punch and Judy then materialises so as to entrance my inner mind! Wasn't my eldest step-son, Crinkley Rage Ransom, keen on such allusions as these? Well! Let us examine the evidence which fate has lain before us… For a Ghost has mushroomed or come up behind Mister Punch on an illuminated stage. It slid up avaunt him or abreast of no purport whatsoever. In reckoning thus, however, this particular glove-puppet took on the formula of a skeleton. Might it intone one of those that exists in a tank (?); as is contained in those sundry exhibition cases in the Royal College of Surgeon's museum. I think it happens to be situated in south Kensington, central London. Anyway, it bobbed or weaved around this stage in a jig; thereby seeking to reconnoitre our mountebank's ready eye. In appearance – though – it embodied a medical specimen lying on a saw-bone's bench… albeit after the fashion of one of Holbein's renaissance pictures. Suddenly, Punch spied 'its' frame or focus behind him – and he came over all frit. He proceeded to address the audience: 'Boys and girls, mums and dads, my brethren and 103

their sisters', he gargled, 'if you make out that noxious ghost again or find him loitering in these pavilions… you will tell me, won't you?' All of which has to be directed at a diverse audience out there. May it similarly relate to the Clink Museum in Soho, central London, set up by the former Bishop of Winchester in order to illustrate instruments of torture? Furthermore, this ghost or spectre continues to haunt Mister Punch in a way that echoes Caesar's or Banquo's manifestations. Never mind now… since Punch's all-over leer – when combined with his goggling eyes –

suffuses our blue-light without any shame. On occasion – and when privy to a scream's vehicle – the skeleton's head can become detached from its puppet body. It then pursues, in a rather elongated fashion, the nemesis of Punch's extract or falsehood – if only to fire a beam, thereby. On and on came this disembodied skull, before Punch succeeded in batting it away with his joy-stick. WAP! It resultantly disappeared in double-quick time… and Punch cried out after it: 'That's the way to do it!' No-one can recollect at this late date why such a wraith haunts Mister Punch. Some observers declare it has to be his bad conscience – especially after having murdered Judy without any remorse. Other pundits, pollsters and soapbox orators pooh-pooh the entire notion. Could it possibly be Judy's spirit hovering around him… who knows? To be blatant with you, my young scamp, I don't recollect whichever sprite or bogle latches onto Mister Punch… thence eating into his spirit or coming to deny him meritorious work. Do you have any idea about this whatsoever? Any road up, a knock on the head soon sees to that swivel-test, me ducks.

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Regardless of this jack-in-the-box's rantings, however, cannot I see my erstwhile attorney, Montague Raitt, standing next to my daughter's right collar-bone? Look upon it this way, he's fulfilling an official function by attending my burial mount at Sutton Hoo… or is it a last resting place? The Episcopalian pastor then intones the ultimate post before this throng: ashes to 104

ashes; dust to dust. It gives me a queer feeling (I have to say), when looking down on these proceedings from above."

FOURTEEN

"Every civilisation rests on force or ukase, and it comes into its own when each scream's part of the design." Jonathan Bowden, quoted from an early text, on the blog known as hoover hog.

Ancient Cramp <<a man or will-o'-the-wisp who's finally come to enjoy his out-of-the-body experience. What does the mystic or seer Alphonse Constant have to say about an astral body that's topped by an enlarged,

purple head?>> “Nonetheless, several more days have passed down below on middle earth, and then the solicitor Raitt rings my children to inform them about the Will.

Yes indeedy! Let’s listen in, my fellow travellers, at least by way of an interlocution or its dialectic.”

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “I knew we’d eventually have to catch up with you, shyster. For our step-father’s keepsake (i.e., his Last Will & Testament) resembles a moral kidnapping or some sort of gaol break. Don’t think that his step-sons are fooled by anything… since his adventures ahead of the tomb-stone involved the disinterment of a skeleton, without any reference to the passage of Punch and Judy’s skit across the stage. Any key can turn in a lock after it’s been oiled; the former prior to an explanation due to Freudian coitus. Have you ever skimmed H.J.

Eysenck (?); he declares it to be a matter of bunkum. Remember, my errant member of the Law Society, no entreaty may ever assail death without vampirism’s wit.

+

Anyway, a distant dawn (or its land of visitation) comes up in order to complete our retina’s capture. Now then, what really characterises it? Well! A battering mob has come to the door of this deluded shack, if only to see Young Man’s Cramp cast his arm or its amplitude across the entrance. RAT-A-TAT-TAT…

the crowd beats upon the door so as to gain egress (thereby).

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Even as, at this juncture, a pipe, mace, halberd and various grappling-irons are seen to pop up from behind a wooden frame.

The flimsy aspen structure then begins to heave, warp, buckle and give way – at least before it comes to sag irretrievably on a post. Yet a shaven-headed Crinkley steps towards his step-father, so as to proffer a used two

pennyworth. A gesture which seems to be protective, but that also looks sullen in its indistinctness.

‘Let me deal with this example of a gladiator’s canaille, all-father, since your post must be to resuscitate the necessary absence of one’s chicks’. ‘No way’, replies he, ‘I forbid the observance of so unseasoned a Sunday service. Instead – my progeny of the hive – you should thin out your atomic structure by using the circuitry encased around your loins’. ‘Fading out’, declares one of them – if only to be followed by the shading eddy of another. ‘Observe this rhapsody in red’, quoth he… at a moment where Ovid’s wraiths merge into the ether; while reckoning on naught save a silent deliquescence. Soon they are all gone; whether we were referring to Ransom’s tonsured hooliganism or Tiberius’ rags-and-serfs’ hoody. Each one eclipses the other towards a sense of grey… and this was irrespective of whether any of them have heard of Britain’s equivalent to New Slovenian Art, the Grey Movement. Yet instantaneously, the behemoth which is Hobbes’ version of the crowd surges into the room; and they are all found to be yelping, hollering, belching, gaping and hawking. All of them besport towels or rags (of one sort or another) across their bald pates.

Moreover, most of their number carry weapons and their eyes seem distended or in turmoil, and the occasional tooth protrudes from their languid gums. Have you ever noticed that ugliness and inferiority often prove to be synonymous? Must it essentially amount to an illustration of Gustav le Bon’s thesis – as outlined in his Psychology of Crowds?

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Nonetheless, our mass or throng surges now towards its temporary goal. Do you choose to comprehend it? Since one of his preliminary clucks or squibs, Tiberius Ovant, remains subject 106

to manhandling by this seething residuum. They have captured him and he is open to their licentiousness… especially at even-tide. Their hands definitely claw at his exposed throat; and are their nails really long or scraggy? ‘Kill the beast, burn his toast, cut out his eyes and play marbles with them’, they chant repeatedly. ‘Cramp, old fellow, the Great Beast of the multitude has me in its clutches or talons. I couldn’t phase out properly

as a consequence'. 'I recognise your dilemma, my sprat. It's why I have stayed behind in order to assist you', answered his co-sponsor."

FIFTEEN

Montague Raitt: "Let me interrupt you, Crinkley, in case your diatribe disabuses you to the point of madness. Yes! You may mutter the following imprecations… 'The Will has been perused by all three of us adjacently. Also, we removed it from the undertow of his bedside – while his corpse was warming-to or in our keeping. But like liquid toadstools, we intend to fight it out in the courts. Our collective motto then remains or has to be peace through victory. May he (Ancient Cramp) have been in his cups whilst making it out, or otherwise subject to wine's deleterious influence? Let us move to shatter a bottle of perry over a lukewarm grave! We'll prove in court his gerrymandering, lies, senility and incapacity to render such a codex. There's no doubting it whatsoever… and his Last Will & Testament proves to be a latterday Dead Sea scroll, even a blatant implausibility.

Mightn't it – somewhat resultantly – be an exercise in Dubuffet's Art Brut? We'll gather in order to show the world that this nonagenarian was crazy! (et cetera…)' YET WAIT A MOMENT… what you haven't registered is the following: he actually left a later and more valid Testament. It's a new Will which supersedes the old one, do you see? It serves as a post-script to Ancient Cramp's bedding and its read articles. Do all three of you wish to let rip a wolfish cry of exultation? For it has to recognise a legal deposit office without compare, and it forms a basis over your recovered qualms."

Ancient Cramp: "In relation to which – my vulture step-children are struck dumb with the ecstasy of such a misplacement. Are they really the feral children of a wanton's desire? It seems so…

due to the fact that they exist independently of the city-scape which lies between a Cerberus, possessing three heads, and an attorney in tweeds. Maybe they will feel free and easy enough to hand round the Baddeley cake? A thespian act of generosity (this) in Robert Baddeley's Will of 1744, as is espied over the enactment of Twelfth Night at Drury Lane."

SIXTEEN

Ancient Cramp<<who's now looking through a lens of darkly misted time>>: "What can it be about music coming to soothe the savage breast, according to the poet? For hope springs eternal in my three step-sons… and on the morning of the second Will's declamation, they stop off to place flowers on my grave."

Arbuthnot Robinson: "You must be absolutely insane, old boy!

On a morn like this, to lope off and strew reeds of lustre (or false judgement) on a termagant's reeking corpse, I ask you….

Doesn't it exemplify a particular scene from a Gnostic Punch and Judy? A moment wherein a lurid glow examines this defensive or forlorn ideal. Immediately thereafter, I looked up at the Punch and Judy theatre on the sands. It had become brightly lit up or otherwise bobbled in the light – thereby dodging this way and t'other, if only to illumine these pitches of the dead. Listen, my brothers, a mysterious whirring has turned up – even as our toy theatre swayed in the moonlight… and the booth's red-and-yellow colouring glinted dully. On this stage's aperture were Punch and the Doctor – both of whom seemed to be hesitant over each other's glare – even though they're 'operating' on Pretty Polly (otherwise). Do you choose to remember her? Ancestrally speaking, she was Punch's girlfriend – rather like Lois Lane in Superman – and this girl came over as unknown to the show's childhood participants in contemporary time. A rubiate glow (according to an active spirituality) imbues this proscenium's 108

scene, and it even extends to the scalpel in our medical-man's hand… Could this pompous MD be a Victorian gentleman, or quite possibly a shaman of different states? Who knows – my league of deviants? But before master Keats or the slitter's entry

– an amazing visitation occurs… A codicil or Robert Service proem whereby a snake emerges from Polly's mouth, coils around her scalp and bites her surgeon's hand. Was it an example of the worm ouroborous (?); i.e., the scaliest one who goes about devouring its own tail. Or alternatively,

might it illustrate Giotto's sigil – the latter pertaining to envy – and soon to be discovered anew in Italy's Scrovegni palace."

SEVENTEEN

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "I'm not mad, old man, merely delivered of a new livery or its caprice… since these flowers are just the manifestation of a new Cyclops, especially if its one eye comes draped with such corn dollies as these. May it take your fancy to own a wickerman, even if your scanty intent is to set it afire?

Anyway, why don't the two of you lighten up? For the racing of my pulse has led to a new acclimatisation… because the rabble must have already taken hold of Young Cramp, primarily by leading him out from a marble colonnade to an execution pillar!

They march onwards – albeit heaving and snarling – if only to lead our lord & master off to a steam turbine room. Behind them, various flames leap up avaunt some disjointed sculpture… and this is during a period where Paolozzi-like machines, doused in ash, limit the pedigree of a newly Modern flourish. Could it be a Futurist frenzy, or more precisely, the right stuff of either Tom Wolfe's or Ernst Junger's diction? Still, I have escaped from the hydra's clutches by clambering over various interconnections of pipe. It had proved to be a finite resolve – or possibly a delimiting of Bic's blade."

Crinkley Rage Ransom: "You must be over-joyed to spill out from beyond their coils?"

Tiberius Hague-Ovant: "Yes, frankly… because now we are free to collect our winnings from Life's court. Like the brown cadaver grasping a plump maiden in mediaeval pageantry, we can join battle with Norman O. Brown's Life against Death. By any deliberation though, we owe the old boy a bouquet of rough diamonds which has been spread with petals' frost… but not a

‘bouquet of barbed wire’ a la Andrea Newman. Remember, fellow dreadnoughts: we are making up for the one we didn’t drop at the funeral!”

Arbuthnot Robinson: “You’ve convinced me of its efficacy – no matter how reluctantly. Yet now that we’ve performed our duty with a perforated trumpet, let’s go and suck up those truffles left by the Will. For didn’t every Punch and Judy man (or so-called Professor) have about his person a young assistant known as the Bottler? An impresario, this, who looked strangely simian under a green sky… especially when the red-and-yellow awning of the Punch and Judy theatre is seen to billow under a scant wind. A Bottler? Yes, he was the one who master-minded the antics of such a breach; he also got the audience going; as well as stirring up trouble ‘twixt parent and child… or instigating back-chat and heckling. Likewise – and with the clarion ‘come along, boys & girls’ – he pied piper’d the multitude towards this tragi-comedy.

Do you realise that Terence or Plautus had naught comparable?

His most demanding task, however, remains to go round with a tin for the showman at this land’s end. A denouement wherein Gawain meets his very own Green Knight…”

Crinkley Rage Ransom: “Enough of yonder example, man! The show can only be over; why don’t you vault this barrier in order to fight with Grendel and then a crocodile? Moreover, this figurine was a Dragon once upon a time or under Porsini’s tutelage in those wintry depths – could it not be a harbinger of dawn? Let’s depart in order to hear Montague Raitt, our family’s lawyer, recovering this Will alive/alive-o and by the skill of its reading. Do we succeed in leaving Mister Punch, then, to wave 110

his stick at our carnival’s end… particularly when his eyes are all a’goggle? ‘Good-bye, boys and girls’, he squeals through a swazzle; ‘bye-bye’, the dispersing throng calls back to him. They all have their right arms in the air or hold them aloft – like one of Caesar’s satraps saluting. ‘Good-bye, Mr. Punch’, they salaam,

‘good-bye’.”

EIGHTEEN

Ancient Cramp <<who now possesses a voice, no matter how sepulchrally, which spills a lullaby from its ready coffer>>: “The Will is presently being read in Montague Raitt’s office. ‘Please be seated for my bureaucratic spiel’, he chooses to anoint those present with. To look at it from above – my step-children seem to be mightily pleased with themselves. But by contrast, my beloved daughter or little sparrow (Teresa) justifies some tears before a wolverine’s appetite! Yessum… Again, my reader, Montague Raitt’s officious tone scans each period like a metronome or a ‘speak your weight’ machine. Yet my three vultures are speaking about me in unison: ‘What a kindred spirit of Beowulf our step-father resembled – to be sure. Do you recall John Gardner’s addendum or mythus, by way of the monster’s vintage? Never mind: for all three of us wish he’d reached a century or more in such an imaginary game of cricket…’ et cetera. What hypocrites these scions are, and so unusual to have praise of me from their iron lips! To begin with, their earnest vainglory is cocksure or Jerzy Kosinski-like; but over many moments in time a hesitancy creeps into their expressive masks.

Whereas, au contraire, a secret smile of satisfaction starts to break out on Teresa’s face… and it resembles a gloved hand, courtesy of Tiffany’s, that bursts through a manikin’s bust. An illustration of puppetry’s art (it proves to be) which wears a sliver of gold leaf over its tender areas. Likewise, why are there so many deaths in a performance of Punch and Judy? It presumably has to do with the puppet-master’s desire to uncork his left-hand… for does all of this not relate to a prior intrigue?

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Within the purview of which two figurines – one of them possessing a black block over its face – approach the military governor of an unknown province. His visage looks to be impervious to pain, even imperious or lugubrious in its lustre: but in no way worn out. He also wears some chain-mail links in the form of a coif or its talisman, irrespective of a tonsured head-gown…: ‘We’ve found a waif and stray in our researches, wolflings.

May she have been dancing like an erotic ballerina, contrary to all discipline and deportment? Look at this – why don't you?' (He then slides back an inner compartment or drawer-space). 'We'd heard that she'd been feeding at the brain of one trickster, Cramp. So why not allow her to test out some electric-shock boots – toe-to-toe – in order to assess her cavorting ability? A fine job of training her you two marshalled, since this mincing Teresa didn't have the nerve to quench a residual voltage. Now, if you've got aught to declare to me – just take care to unburden your moral conscience. Otherwise, make sure you clear off down a pathway towards oblivion… because I'll be too busy devouring a repast'. With this, two slightly familiar hands deliver a steaming hot-plate – one that's replete by having a Fortnum & Mason's lid on top. 'You butcher… we'll seek vengeance against you by dint of a semblance or surfeit of meat! Where are our cleavers?', declare both warriors at once.

Yet suddenly, they turn abruptly on their respective heels and march out with a quick step. They easily traverse the deep-piled carpet within minutes….all of which means they're outside in an eye's blink. 'Ha!', snarled the Myrmidon they'd left behind,

'they've each resiled from their vigilantism, or otherwise become quivering jelly when confronted with its consequences. Truly, we are the mould within which such gelatine is shaped! Against it, they'll have no alternative but to quit their posts; yet I stand here awaiting Cramp. For once his carrier pigeon doesn't return, he'll wander the world rather like Odin without his staff'. Gingerly –

given the heat – he proceeded to lift one domed lid off a dinner service. Surely it's made of solid silver (?); but all that's contained underneath it were several gelignite sticks, wired, and 112

with a timing-device merrily repeating the following: TICK-TOCK; TICK-TOCK it clipped out. He won't even have time to scream before the explosion rips him apart (you see).

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‘Why do they detest you so?’, the younger charge of the two asks of a mid-life Cramp… a figure who’s somewhat disguised himself. ‘It’s because I’m a dreamer, a visionary or a Jainist of the distaff side. I float between dimensions or Steve Ditko-like borders, and they exist across from Pixie-ish delusions of selfhood. Can you comprehend those boundless walls of verdant green which lie on either side of these hands? (He holds them up

– and as he does so – we see that a younger version of Cramp’s face is illumined in its entirety… it even looks transfigured). I wish to engage in cosmic play or gambols; while they want to own everything – particularly in terms of its monetary worth’.

Did the former militia commander’s bearing have about it – in any composite fashion – the stamp of my three step-sons? They formed an unholy triad, after all…”

NINETEEN

Teresa Mayhew-Phillips: “I can’t quite believe in a providence such as this one.”

Ancient Cramp’s ghost: “About what can she be remarking one wonders? Why, let’s just regard the unaccustomed masks of my three step-triplets… can’t we superintend their aggressive canines, bullet-like orbs and caustic gait? Are they not a visitation of disappointment – most palpably? Look at them: it’s almost funny to observe the cauterised hope which has been etched on every feature. If I weren’t already dead, my daughter, I’d have a good belly laugh about it… an exercise in Schadenfreude or what? Mayhap it comes to intone the following phantasy… A scenario in which a skeletal or blanched man –

who’s heavily masked – strides across a paper-thin bridge. Surely now, it exemplifies that magisterial spasm of light which is cast across water – itself almost after the fashion of the living 113

lightning? Wasn’t Zeus the master here, and doesn’t this last structure speak of or muster up the curving millennium bridge in Newcastle-upon-Tyne? Any road: ‘I’ am led by my nose over a cascade of lava – albeit with

strange cries of either ecstasy or despair coming up from the reek. Suddenly my form is grabbed by a seething claw; and it originates from below when garbed in some gaseous fibre, and these fingers stretch out so as to gain a hold of their prey. As if by some injunction – one of the bridge's guards then prods at it with a whistling pole. Does it bend and stretch like an oarsman's barge or stick; i.e., a device which is best seen on one of those punts plying the Isis? Nonetheless, his action saves me from a manhandling by one of these savants…

a creature whose misshapen paw releases my sleeve thereby.

These gases continue to swirl or fade towards green simultaneously, and I look down into their midst. All I can see are some distended and deranged faces which gaze up at one from such diseased vapours. One tournament head seems to grit its teeth; while another two ventriloquist dummies have open or lolling mouths. Where do they come from (in particular)? How can they continue to live down there in an eldritch pit? For what ultimate purpose is their existence poured forth around us?

'Down freaks!', the gaolers condescend to scream over them…

but I am no longer listening. Because all of my hearing has to be concentrated on an inner voice – yet surely my understanding of them faces metamorphosis by gas? But might it be something aught or other than this? Could I really be party to an outer perimeter of Hell (?); one that proves to be far worse than John Martin's postulate. (Even Dante's divine comedy doesn't really come into our picture; it's too poetic…)

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Then I remember – with a loud thunderclap – where I've seen such masks before… were they not grotesque imps who had been perverted by silence? For all of them bore an uncanny resemblance to my three vulture step-sons… even though my legitimate daughter, Teresa, can hardly hide her broad smile throughout. Yes… it was in a storehouse of Punch and Judy 114

figurines where my recollection clusters. Moreover, each and every one of these macabre dolls has been delineated in a higgledy-piggledy manner –

after a certain species of envy or malice aforethought. Their overall troupe bore Roselia's name or vintage, and they were late Victorian puppets taken from Richard Gill's collection. (Note: all of them stare out from a grainy photogravure, by Waldo Lanchester, in Michael Byrom's book about Punch). Some of these hideous gloves wore a chattering class o' distemper (like the Skeleton); whereas others bewailed a bear's habitation (in a carnival reminiscent of Judy, the Padre, various Boxers, the Law's long-arm a la the Policeman, Egypt's King S***o, and a trite puritan akin to the Beadle). All of this wrecking crew included the Crocodile as well as other painted dolls, and 'he' existed adjacent to a long-box or gibbet. It flashed an unbearable length of gnashers-cum- teeth – themselves alienated to a fault or all at once. Might each one have been continuously using 'Rembrandt' – the American non-fluoride toothpaste that's blue in colour? Who can otherwise remember it clearly?

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Meanwhile, my non-biologic children seem to look remarkably similar to me. Their eyes revolved in round sockets – each one's fists became clenched; perspiration broke out in unlikely places or ducts, and the gang's teeth gritted the asphalt of an unknown beginning. All three of them have become a picture of bewilderment, fury, enmity, disillusionment and unresolved asperity. 'The sick scarecrow', lashed out Crinkley Rage Ransom, 'let's dig him up, eviscerate the corpse and boil it in acid'. 'No, that's too lenient', stormed Arbuthnot Robinson, 'we must scrape out his eye-balls with our bare hands – and play marbles with them afterwards'. 'Do you know what?', enthused Tiberius Hague-Ovant in a dark humour, 'we ought to rip off his pizzle and feed it to some pigs in a sty'.

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The reason for such 'anti-humanist' outbursts as these? Why, let's just listen to the solicitor, Montague Raitt, who has finished 115

reading my Will. Its last line declares: 'All my estate shall be divided equally between those children of mine who attend their father's funeral'.

Ancient Cramp

THAT’S THE WAY TO DO IT!”

116

EVOLUTION X

A dystopian fable

Dramatis Personae: These include a hermit, a sage or an unaccustomed philosopher whose name is Heraclitus Bean, a physiocrat. Whereas two sadic psychiatrists also strut through these pages. They go under the names or keepsakes of Whopper and Topper. Four soldiers likewise find themselves configured in a version of Greek tragedy by Richmond Lattimore. Their names are as follows: Colonel Ax, Major Tree-bend, Captain Tomb Gooseflesh and Master Sergeant Asphalt#Ray… otherwise known as ‘Rock’. (Collectively they are called ‘the Swine’).

Superintending all of this though, one has to consider a female angel of death… is she an indo-european djinn or something of a Kali europa? Her title remains a steel-trap before dying and the words used were Sabrina-Tara Tomkins. Might she be a reverse anima or extension of Heraclitus Bean?

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On the cusp of minor characters, two soldiers of fortune or other operatives – Warp and Weft – make an occasional appearance.

While a cretin – Mister Nobody – drifts in and out of this sequence.

FIRST SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Fenris will devour Odin eventually… but not quite yet. For the exemplification of this vision shows off the following tableau – namely, a blue curtain or its bamboo frame of wall existing beyond a pyramid of doubt. To one side of such a field of vision – and alien to its right – can be seen a fire-grate which consists of sequestered bricks. A brief interlude of flame rears up to one side of it; at once solemn in its own infraction or delusion. By way of a delimited rose, however, a woven carpet hangs from

the far wall via a pin. It berates the following witness in an alien tongue – sympathy is weakness (it reads): in a manner which passeth all understanding. To the other extent of our envisaged spot, various homily accoutrements peep out from 117

their shelves. These include a coffee-pot and sauce-pan, together with the odd wine-bottle or accustomed plate. On a lower table some simple fare seems to be laid out; possibly to the accompaniment of indications like cheese, bread and brandy-snap. BUT OUR ATTENTION BECOMES ARRESTED BY

THE CENTRAL FIGURE IN ALL OF THIS… and he remains a man of approximately middle-size. He is lashed to a chair and appears to be bidden – in his absence – to the sovereignty of bondage. About his neck he looks to have some pilot's goggles; while his uniform sports epaulettes amid a tab of green.

Moreover, this character's mouth lies open – as if to scream!

Yet what concentrates our insight has to be his golden skin; the secular trunk of which resembles ambrosia or the food of the Gods! Could it revisit – albeit in reverse order – the futurist sculpture by Boccioni known as Unique forms of Continuity in Space (1913)? A set-up wherein the muscularity of Thorak comes unstuck; if only in a whirligig of ormolu or under the apportioned trajectory of a black lotus (merely). May we spy it amidst a vortex of speed – rather unhesitatingly? Anyway, such a figure's skin-cloth evinces a tapestry of runes: and it is rather like the cold, inhuman, Apollonian grandeur of an ancient mask.

Does Apollo really blast those around him with the asperity of his languor? Behind which lurks an ever-present semblance of the reptilian…

What might our crucified victim be crying out at? Why, can it have aught to do with a large scimitar which was multi-dimensional in its use and hungered for his throat? Its handle seems to be appended to some scarlet, but the hand which wields it is Midas' or otherwise comes spray-painted over tungsten's absence.

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Superintending all of the above, though, an old woman plays with the nature of an animate computer… it fizzles and pops under the trill of her delicate hands. Her name was Sabrina-Tara Tomkins and the Burroughs machine which she skilfully 118

administers has a mock-human visage. Indeed, its eyes remain silent within an orb-time's salience… since the death-grimace of its mask portends many of Paolozzi's machines or fake sculptures of a reverse temperature. Do you recall the one –

modelled on Blake's temperance o' Newton – that adorns the British Library on Euston's Road? Nonetheless, this robotic imprecation resuscitates Isaac Asimov's I Robot, but without the humanism which disfigures the latter. Even though its head succeeds in having about it a carapace of steel – the former cleaved in half – or contrapuntal over a skull's deliverance. It looks like an egghead when it's been raised on goat's cheese; yet without the inescapability of a brain outside its palimpsest. May one detect the limbering up of such an attitude? For no other spartan architecture ricochets into sight – despite the fact that Spengler's Man and Technics might be involved… Because this living or main-frame computer resuscitates an Aztec god, Xolotl, at once deluded of all pain and reckoning on one's sacrificial innocence. Mightn't it reimburse either D.H. Lawrence's The Plumed Serpent or Dennis Wheatley's Dangerous Inheritance?

No matter… quod we shall meet it again. Its name is Kill-Martin.

SECOND SURAH>>>

In theatrical terms, our play begins here…

Colonel Ax: "Observe the trajectory of my finger, comrade. It points in a line towards the forgiveness of our goal… Can you detect its limitations on this ordnance survey map, perchance?

Yes sir, since we are only momentarily free from the cruelty which binds us to our shadow-worlds. For all love contains within it the parsimony of fear.

Now then, our job is to place an agent at the heart of this town or Gotham, and it exists right at the cross-roads of enemy activity. He will play a decisive role in our future strategy; primarily by outmanoeuvring the dullards (thereby) and shifting them onto destruction's path. This hamlet's name – when situated on a blue silt road – folds into the word Nonesuch. Yet it shall be from this humble clay that we'll create our Golem… do you follow? It even reminds me, en 119

passant, of the character with an unfolding or extending neck known as Scaramouch. Doesn't he figure in a mountebank's carnival – never mind a populous circus – under the title of Mister Nobody? Given Cruikshank's talent for enlivening him, we are free to observe such tightly woven steel-engravings of yesteryear (especially…)"

Major Tree-bend: "Was he accompanied in Collier's edition by twin tumblers – on either side of him – and balancing their art accordingly?"

Colonel Ax: "Quite so. For Piccini's tragi-comedy exists in the mass mind and it trumps those distant Attic comedies from whence it came. Yessum… Punch & Judy may not be the elixir, but it certainly cries out to us in the desert for some water. Let us mix this holy water with the haemoglobin of so much communal forgetting! Is it only my mind's-eye – or may I see its proscenium arch rising before me (?); at once merely graven to the day it was born and flapping its red/yellow awning. Eric von Daniken's sun has come out or the beach seems misty with its haze, and one's sea laps up over some frontier pebbles. Aren't they frightfully exposed? Let us look at the play's cast list – at least in terms of its innermost population. (In his imagination, therefore, Colonel Ax draws down each puppet from its hook…

and every glove-indicator has a space for itself at our theatre's back.)

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Look here, my desperadoes in mayhem… the first stick-figure we happen to draw from this habit is the Skeleton. (He holds it in his imagination or on an outstretched palm.) It gibbers on my hand in an enclosed manner of bone; and it just doubles up aplenty or is otherwise ready for a saturnine nocturne.

Yet who knows why it haunts Mister Punch – when placed next to this salutary curtain? Can its gesture prove to be anything other than macabre

– particularly after the aphrodisiac of ‘Death’s dance’? A scorpionic interlude (this is) which was scripted throughout time 120

by none other than Felicien Rops, Odilon Redon, Durer, Breughel, Ligeti and many a mediaeval illuminator who worked on drear manuscripts. Could it fasten on Punch’s conscience by betraying his instincts; and thus represent the shroud of a departed Judy?”

Major Tree-bend: “It bespeaks of Judy’s ghost who wails to the gallery after some failed kindred or other…”

Colonel Ax: “Ah, verily, we are resolved to murder one another like Cain who slew his brother, Abel. For the finest sundering of a life was to free up its manumission (you see). There can be little glory in war save death, yet the cloaking of unBeing proves to be our conflict’s elixir! Do you remember the anomie of Ajax (?) when seen here in this Romanesque triumph… but not really betokening an illusion. What did the ancient sage Heraclitus have to utter about it, at least when transposed to Karl Edward Wagner’s diction? I must declare that he pronounced the following: war is father of all things; king of all things; it makes some men Gods, of some free men, and of others slaves. Pursuant to this rectification, however, don’t you see that we require a spy here? (He pointed down at the map as he said this, and continued to eye its topography after a vulture’s piece). Kubla-rebok (or Nonesuch) happens to be a town that’s surrounded by some basalt cliffs, each one of which finds itself riven asunder by variously grassy steppes. We require an agent to be right at its epicentre or frigid in its posting in terms o’ graft, and such a talent’s liable to oversee everything as its Apostle. Can you really catalogue a posting for this harpy or wolverine? Since this cartography courses away under my finger or within a bluish haze… Was it (no matter how adjacently) the square of a deluded reading – or some other calculus betimes?”

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins <<when viewing him sideways-on, or from another dimension>>: “How may Colonel Ax be properly characterised? For surely, he illustrates a matador at the point of 121

our bull's rupture (?) – much like one of Francis Bacon's paintings. Because his skull is balding under an upturned orange-crate; what with two epaulettes appearing next to a tunic of winsome green. Moreover, he continues to wear a metal visor over his head (briefly); if only to exaggerate the sententious mutterings of a mouth beneath this. Ecce homo – behold the man! But it's not necessarily an example of salvator mundi, after the Renaissance painter Antonello, but still… can't we discern a telecommunication's wrist-band that's subsumed in a gauntlet?

Over all though, the effect remains of H.P.McNeill's Bulldog Drummond without the mouth-wash…"

THIRD SURAH>>>

Colonel Ax: "We have now discovered an opportune way to penetrate to its 'heart'; at least by way of an available aorta.

Listen to me: in the inner vortex of Kubla-rebok there lies an idiot who's oblivious to all honours or medals, and he truly represents a man alone. His name happens to be Mister Nobody.

Now – what terms of reference attach themselves to his Quicksilver retinue? Why, they would merely be bullets of indifference such as hippy, yippie, recluse, hermit, Breed, refusenik (sic), drop out, long shaggy dog, et cetera… these were the mileage of so many slugs! Was he not a delinquent object in our planned socialist state, rather like in Ayn Rand's Anthem…

albeit in reverse? For such bourgeois individualism has no regard to Moreau's new men or our bay-of-plenty. Touché!"

Major Tree-bend: "Yet how can our ears be bent towards this absence of social responsibility?"

Colonel Ax: "My master of the sub-human reach, I will instruct you… due to the fact that our blood-axes must drip with a carrion of undeclared intrigue. Oh my, yes… this imbecile called Nobody mummifies our car delivery lounge – and must you detect a dent in its bonnet? Because he

remains a perfect target throughout. He also goes nowhere, resiles frustratingly abed, 122

talks to no soul and sits chomping his carrots on a garden of improvidence. To reel this cold-bloodied pike in (then): he would make an ideal operative or secret agent, n’est ce pas?”

Major Tree-bend: “Your linear logic catches my frenzied brain like pitch tar, comrade. How may I – when blushing and with both eyes shut – teach granny to suck eggs? Yet perchance, this ditty must be retrieved from a Pinteresque silence. Can such a sack-cloth-and-ashes be spider-launched; or is it just sitting on some caskets of rare onyx? Further, what about the tarantula – or a hairy arachnid – who guards these opals’ passage with its yellowing fangs?”

Colonel Ax: “Their mouths were not formally agape?”

Major Tree-bend: “Try them and see, my friend… but I still return to the evidence of a Lollard who blows his horn repeatedly. Moreover, doesn’t Sarban’s bookish phantasy hint at some misgivings here? For Ripon’s horn-blowing – in deepest Yorkshire – sounds out every evening from a four-cornered obelisk. It refers to setting one’s watch at nine p.m., and it dates from the year 886 during the reign of Alfred the Great. In short order, my fellow conspirators, how do you cut off Scaramouch’s fake neck so as to void our Mister Nobody? Can you effectively detect the appeal of our wisdom? Would it be altogether credible to train up an idiot as a secret weapon?”

Colonel Ax: “Of course not, comrade – what you do is kill the imp and replace him with a double.”

Major Tree-bend: “It’s a case of Mister Somebody for Mister Nobody, you mean?”

Colonel Ax: “Most assuredly, a game of six aces has striven to draw its own blood…”

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FOURTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “I look on, multi-dimensionally speaking, in order to assess the plenitude of one’s wrath. It beguiles my ever-present witness (you see), since do I render concrete each waspish desire? Never mind, my lovelies… because Colonel Ax has resumed his role as an unannounced Professor, in this ‘Punch and Judy’ performance of the mind’s-eye. It may never match the exaltation of Sophocles; yet it shall often alter one’s inner cascade in terms of the wisest, oldest, greatest play ever told.

Colonel Ax holds up the Baby now; at least when it proves to be naked over a noon-day’s thumb. Similarly, one can gaze into its visage independently of all else; if only to cancel out the impediment of a necessary scream. Can the babe stand revealed as a blighter whose mouth’s been hollowed out in plastic; and yet the latter seems to be short of an ovular perspective? Don’t forget, boys and girls, that this particular figurine mimes to a stick… whereas all the other papier mache macabres (to give vent to every 57th variety) are glove-puppets withal.

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Next up in this catalogue of spirits comes Judy and her face seems to be refracted in sunlight, thus existing off to one side of the palaver. Needless to say, this was by wit of one present-absence – since a halo of reverse glory appears to masquerade as her mask, albeit pinching it in order to achieve its resolve.

More so, my ducks: the tragic or grotesque elements of our revels (or Piccini’s) comes to be grafted onto a guaranteed Masque. But it’s not necessarily one underscored by Henry Lawes… why so?

Why, quod here pops up Joey the Clown; a figurine who’s crisply attended to in his own booth. He – a direct descendant from the Harlequin’s jeremiad – plays tricks on Mister Punch and mimics him in accordance with this farce’s tradition. Moreover, his face comes to be painted with brilliant white or grease-paint; together avec great black-lips, red spots on the cheeks and gravy tears over one’s brow. Also, he besports a ruff around his own collar – next to a silken jerkin of some red-like apparel.

Likewise, the Circus’ awning shows up horizontally behind him.

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Are his capricious frolics using caps, bells, frying-pans, sausages, hide-and-seek, ad infinitum, as the elixir of a theatre’s sword-play?”

Avaunt thee – an argument commences out of Time; Look at how they wield each baton,

Plus malefic Punch clubs Judy dead,

O, Pulcinella! What hectoring sprites…

FIFTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Yet let us continue to over-watch Sabrina-Tara Tomkins, and this is regardless of how she deals with a recumbent Fate. Will she choose to monitor her machine, Kill-Martin, over the effect of its misadventures? Possibly yes; at variance no… since Sabrina-Tara immediately seeks to divest herself of a shift or cloth that surrounds her. Could it be made of some white muslin, or even a similarly diaphanous material?

Anyway, no sooner has she divested herself of this accoutrement

– than this matriarch belabours about her with a stick! Might it recall a liquorice baton, or one of those joy-sticks associated with Punch & Judy? Since around her person – or stood in circuitous relief – there happens to be row-upon-row of toy soldiers. A large number of them consist of Guards per se, or members of the Queen’s own household regiments… together with busbies, ornate bayonets at the ready, and red tunics. Some of them seemed to be approximately life-size or William Roberts-like, and all were characterised by those light-green bases… the latter studded in metal. Surely one remembers those military figures of old; especially when cast by manufacturers like Britons and Sons, limited? During the course of such Grand Guignol, though, Sabrina-Tara becomes convulsed with rage… and she behaves like a ravening fury (sic) without the Euminedes’ intervention.

Her grey hair streaks behind her flailing arms – all of which are now fixated upon their object, or rinsed with an unsavoury projectile throughout. Whereas one eye glares in a larger way than the other – albeit with a rapt attention to iciness that hints at 125

the reptilian beneath. Furthermore, Sabrina's lips sprout or

'pyramid' out towards turquoise, and her orbs beetle in an ironic pitch… while her face became creased with livid indents. May such tractor-tracks o' the soul actually hint at a metaphor, or do they personify the Swine foregathered below?

SIXTH SURAH>>>

A porcine medley is accustomed to carouse or spin – by way of a Master's dance…

Colonel Ax: "We certainly have a perfect replacement for our very own Scaramouch. Do you detect this transportation into such plastic tongues? Our state must kill a clown – replace him with a living Plastinate or identikit picture – and then exhibit this folly as a Turner prize entrant. It can either be a mosaic or a stained-glass window; at least in terms of our indifference to pain…"

Major Tree-bend: "You already have the correct scarecrow mapped out?"

Colonel Ax: "Most assuredly – my man; for collectivisation of individual co-ordinates is our endeavour. On this levy, then, L.P.

Hartley's Facial Justice rises to our attention… but we reject its accelerating cascade of reaction. Does one recollect the woman who travelled from England's south coast in order to damage some stained-glass windows in the 'fifties? She was hysterically middle-brow (you see). When such images as these had been spliced into Coventry cathedral thanks to Graham Sutherland, so as to reconsecrate the place after war-time bombing. Truly, our definition of mortal liberty has to be a boot stamping on a face forever. Are we all true socialists here (?); that is, robots who prove to be golden-skinned and capable of ought…"

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Major Tree-bend: “How do we witness this aureole of our birth?

For let’s damn the consequences and name our minister of unreliance…”

Colonel Ax: “You may have your wish, my comrade-in-arms, particularly when it’s patterned on a bullet in the kidneys. His calling-card has to go by the name of Heraclitus Bean – that is to say, a hermit who lives alone in those abandoned hills. Were they blue-tinged; or otherwise coupled with a lozenge of distracted light? Whereupon, and like the modernist composer Messiaen, he seems to prefer the company of birds – unlike those characters in Daphne du Maurier’s short story. Yet the armature of his very silence or pendulum, which suits him at this moment of rest, will serve him well over forgotten commando skills… the former nagging at his sleeves.”

Whopper: “Are we not lucky in finding a recluse who’s already attuned to these Mysteries? For isolation always opens the mind to an absence of pity. Further to this, the work of Jean-Paul Sartre remains incorrect in so many things – do you see?

Especially when we recognise that hell approximates less to other people than an absence of their presence. Surely each is a snail, with or without a shell, who leaves a silvery trail upon open ground? Ooze betrays its necessary filter; and yet Hades remains an osmotic barrier through which les autres can’t travel.”

Colonel Ax: “They shall not pass!”

Whopper: “Quite.”

SEVENTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “Whopper and Topper are two dissident psychiatrists; and each of them is found to be redolent of those dislocations in Zamyatin’s We. The former connects to a bean-pole who’s many hands high in its horse-flesh; while the latter 127

betrays R.D. Laing without an itch… Similarly, these leftwing authoritarians seek to refute Anti-Oedipus, a thesis put forward by Deleuze and Guattari. For them, the mad and the sane have not changed places; they merely must do so… Can I welcome them back to my particular hive? Since one's bodice harbours the attention of its armour or cover-all – not to mention a cloak behind my back and the flowing ricochet of a skirt. Welcome friends, to a nemesis of nothing but death… Look: I remain able, in our little psycho-drama, to pull another glove-puppet over one of these gauntlets. Certainly, the Doctor appears now – at once moustached – and available for any action by way of a drop of physic. PHYSIC… PHYSIC: let's understand whether a tell-tale heart clutches at its own bypass. Here he comes (however) and he looms up behind Punch who lies prone on the stage. 'Are you well, Mister Punch?', 'No, I'm dead!', 'Really? How long have you enjoyed corpse-like status?', 'A thousand years', 'As long as that – eh? I don't believe you're kaput at all, Mr. Punch', 'Let me rest on these peaceful boards… AAHHH!', 'Wait an instant, I declare, what you need is some physic. I'll be right back with a bottle… soon as I've boiled down the baby for its marrow',

'Your very own snake-oil, I'll be bound.'"

EIGHTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: On top of a lonely hill – or by virtue of burrowing into its insignificance – a hermit was seen to live out his secluded life. Whereas any photographic exposure seems to enhance a scintilla of blue; or otherwise finds itself given over to a space's absence. Meanwhile, we notice that two secret policemen and their attendant medicos are approaching a hut. While two figurines – with fixed bayonets apiece – stand guard on either side of this aperture. On closer inspection, though, weren't they those toy soldiers we mentioned before?

Colonel Ax: "Congratulations, comrade, you have been picked out for a special mission or task, and are thereby ennobled by this 128

preferment. The serving of one's country is a special commission in peace – never mind in times of war or conflict."

Scene-setting: (Yet, sub species aeternatis, one also happens to be walking across his grave's top – albeit in steel-shod boots.

Could it be Sabrina-Tara Tomkins who adorns our mind; other than in a situation where she's worshipped anew? Her medusean form stands erect on a minimal dais, and it's rather reminiscent of that actress who played Tamora, Queen of the Goths… Do you remember? For she came forward in a livid and intense manner; as well as being basilisk-eyed, heavily mascara'd, and redolent of Beresford Egan's images when these were pursuant to Audrey Beardsley out of Baudelaire. All of which proceeds from the director Peter Brook's violent use of Shakespeare's dramaturgy in Titus Andronicus).

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Colonel Ax: "You are dead, comrade citizen – yet we will force you to live again, irrespective of all other mission statements.

You must serve the state as either an integer or a cellular construction of the impossible. Can you really be aware of the honour we bestow upon you? For – like O'Brien's diatribe in Nineteen Eighty-Four – do you die when your finger-nails are trimmed? And, more than ever so, didn't Anthony Burgess not gloss this particular caper in 1985 – the latter replete with proletarian argot?"

Scene-setting: (But still and all, a batch of toy-soldiers was seen to be marching around Sabrina's plinth. Round and around they circle – without any culpable object whatsoever. Do they have an end in view; and what's it to be if discovered? Above all else, a saturnine catchment area then breeds forth from the Gods – albeit with a prism-violet streak to its available ether. Some great hulking machinery – all the while – also lifts off so as to surround this placement with diverse circuitry. Whilst superintending all of the above… a massive granite statue looks down betimes. It portends a doctrine of ceaseless struggle plus 129

some negative statement or other. May it betoken an Assyrian deliverance; or likewise measure up to the doctrine of believe-obey-fight in Mussolini's discourse? Truly, strength comes through an unfolding plenitude of such

joy!) Heraclitus Bean: “I don’t wish to be any part of your proposed imbroglio. My stillness recoils from a past of either attested want or a hive of bees… whether translated by Arthur Sutro or not.

Might I apportion blame’s transparency; at least in terms of an unabated Punch and Judy? Look here… how many times can Pulcinella let go of the cry: ‘ Huzza, huzza: the Devil is dead!’

Because he always has occasion to defeat him in the booth, as Doctor Johnson once bluntly inferred. Do I hold him out here on my exposed hand’s entreaty?”

Topper: “This citizen chunters on like a pocket-sized Mephisto.”

Heraclitus Bean: “Most certainly, I have succeeded in fording the aftercare of my own tiny wants – no matter how manifestly…

Still and all, our version of Old Nick rears up through an accustomed flood-gate. See here: must we love or swoon before the flaming red-linen of his magisterial garb? Too true, my friends, in that we are trapped in the mechanistic fortitude of everyday patterns. Wherein an old sour puss lies in an expended glove-puppetry on one’s left-side. Most profitably, his infernal watch-tower looms up forevermore; and it merely seems to be blood-red in its expectancy or force. With a stop-gap to the mouth like a melisma – or fluted concerning a horn and pushed out by way of an ear-tube – are we right to sense the kaos of Anton LaVey’s format? Presumably though, these forgotten hemicycles of grime – resembling the circular arcs left by dirty glasses – constitute the rippling effects of a mouth. Since a modernist constellation of this near-grief comes close to Paul Klee’s picture of a Possessed Girl. Yet behold, Mister Punch and the Devil are fighting once again – with one on top of the other or another… Is it a blur of arrested motion; basically by attesting 130

to a Greco-Roman wrestle plus some necessary sticks? Busy, busy were these paranoids (you see); and each one of them belabours his fellow with a massive hit. Whack! Ah! Stop… my grief. Suddenly our Pluto falls to the boards all but dead, and a balsa or wooden trajectory seems to have stopped his heart.

‘Hooray! Hooray!’, rants Punch in a transgressive vein. ‘Now everyone is liberated from the taint of original sin – and we’re free to fashion the future as our hearts dictate.”

Colonel Ax: “Save in your particular case, my weather-vane…

because you have been appointed by our regime in order to clear an encumbrance. Must you see or recognise the flighty potential of this blind-man’s shaft? For I will have you know that a short-sighted rascal exists way back in Piccini’s Punch and Judy. He probably embodies an elixir of ignorance and folly, when coming straight from mediaeval mime and by way of a Mummers’

anthem. ‘Can’t you detect the light…? Watch out how you swing that billy-club, you blind old blackguard!’ (The colonel, in his bright green jerkin, then strikes a ferocious blow on the hermit’s exposed neck. He does so with a baton made of yew – rather like a cricket bat. Poor Heraclitus can only stagger slightly under its impact.) Observe, dissentient one, how we punish any exemptions from what Khrushchev called socialist legality! Now then, your face and its body have occasion to recall an idiot in a waylaid village. It exists well behind enemy lines. We shall kill him, replace the didicoi with you, ensconce yon in espionage and make use of ye as a spy. The hamlet in which this spastic resides is central to our adversary’s communications… do you follow our drift, perchance?”

Heraclitus Bean: “But I want naught of conflict or its disadvantageous bounty. I only wish to live for a kernel of the mind and its spirit… Don’t you choose to register here, amid these pet animals and birds, the provision of philosophical manuscripts aplenty? They have to adopt the example of

Aquinas, Hegel, Veblen, Searle – plus Joad – on a library shelf of our imagination. You see, I reject the principle of fury.”

(Major Tree-bend then hits him savagely over either side of the neck with a Punch stick).

Major Tree-bend: “Listen to me, comrade: no-one may dismiss our state’s rectification without a bullet in the skull. We’ll resultantly pickle your brain and place it in formaldehyde like Damien Hirst, or use it in medical experiments. Each individual happens to be just an ant in possession of its millenary. None may effectively flee from the utilitarianism of Reason’s cult a la Robespierre. For one’s anti-life equation directs all such temperatures as these. Bah! Do you dare to besmirch the cri de coeur of communist living (?); and can our specimen even recollect Howard Brenton’s The Romans in Britain at the National Theatre?”

Heraclitus Bean: “You make my impossibility of perfection all too clear.”

Scene-setting: All of these collected swine – like in Animal Farm

– then severally retort: “Come with us presently, pawn.”

NINTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Under the watchful boots of our new Colossus, an assembled throng of brigands have gathered together. They line up under a zeppelin’s reverse hanger or expanse; together with their billy-clubs at the ready, and they are waiting to fall on its expectant cargo. These were a collection of youngsters or adolescents (aged between nine and fifteen) who are made to run a gauntlet across this expansive field. Whack… whack… whack…

this Ollendorffian beggarhood then found themselves manhandled by such clubs; much after the imprecision of a Punch & Judy show. Is it occurring down on the sands in Paignton, Devon? Anyway, and pitched into the middle of such a 132

throng comes Sabrina-Tara Tomkins, complete with two great mastiffs. They ramp or rave, and collectively each dog growls or snaps at the bit. Do they likewise wear massive collars (of studded copper) around their necks?

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “Comrades and subalterns, what do we take to be the meaning of Evolution X? I will instruct you now…

For each and every settled dilution in Astaroth’s stomach casts forward a new enzyme – the production of which was by no means consonant with renewed bile, or a quivering jelly-fish.

You see, such fructifications hint at a sympathetic homunculus –

at once held in blue dye – and turning upside down in a chemist’s retort. Avaunt thee! Are its features not creased in agony or shame; at least during a period where a mage seeks out its mediumship? Since evolution occurs due to harshness, negative massage and the duties of a providential discipline, et cetera…

Can it interpret the subsistence of reborn skin; when the latter’s woven over a recently calloused wound? Yet fortitude shall be galvanised from a sense of weakness – as long as we spend our lives avoiding those delicious plums of pity.”

TENTH SURAH>>>

Heraclitus Bean now finds himself exposed to Whopper’s and Topper’s lair – there to undergo conditioning into Mister Nobody, the dotard. Could one hesitate to give out such an advanced message? For W&T (.) were psychiatrists who sought to mould Man like plasticene in concord with statal purposes.

Whopper: “Your complacency before the facts is truly alarming, boy. Do you notice the mistakes you have failed to ascertain –

primarily in terms of this test paper? I assure you that no good may come from so clever-clever an attitude. Begin again, prey, for if dissatisfied… we shall have no recourse but to flay you alive! Is it really the case that we roll out the unforgettable drama, as occasioned by Punch and Judy, under the imagined ostracism of their biographer, George Speaight? In any event, 133

here comes the Beadle – i.e., the present articulator of so much officious patter! In most cases – whether designed by Fred Tickner or not – he intones a help-meet of bureaucracy, or an exemplifier of the iron cage. (As proves to be contained in the ideology and morals of Max Weber, a German

sociologist from the early twentieth century). Must I reach into the back of this cabinet or awning – so as to bring him forth? Here he comes…

one Beadle – or Black-beetle, as Mister Punch calls him – at once starchy, bewigged, eighteenth century-like, stuffy, with his arms unfolded – plus a handle-bar moustache. Beadle: 'Where's your authority, then?' Punch: 'Here it is'. (Knocks him down). 'I arrest you in the name of the Law'. 'I have no paws'. 'You'll be very sore'. 'I can't help being poor'. 'Do you need anymore?'

'Like Oliver Twist, you're a frightful bore'. 'Take that or this, me boy – what about t'other?' 'Thwack… Whack…Thwang!

Root-toot-toot!'

Topper: "We slacken at the pace of your absent change, earthling. Surely you will detect any effrontery thereafter? Let's begin again… don't you realise that this entire 11-plus has failed the servant's chute? How can you expect to convince anyone if you can't master this yokel's dialect? See here! Your assessment or examination is altogether too correct. For incorrect usage of proletarian argot helps to betray a bourgeois presumption.

Whereas correct grammar – to patent remarks from Baroness Cox's Black Papers – always pays a Reactionary lip-service.

Must you be labelled an enemy of the people by one of our tribunals, lay assemblies or functioning communes? Basically comrade, doesn't Lissagary's diction convince you of a solecism's necessity…? (Note: Lissagary wrote a demi-trotskyite history of the Paris commune in 1870). Isn't inarticulacy the help-meet of the 'oppressed' – by virtue of being head-to-head -

— or even signing off as a redundant dunder-head? It also speaks volumes about English John's cap and bell?"

Heraclitus Bean: “I will do better to avoid a bullet in the skull by dint of some envious tropes. Likewise, I foresee that you wish me to fall through various hoops or gestures; thereby jumping and skipping aft so as to readjust the bait.”

Whopper: “Take care of the license harboured by an insolent tongue, my slave! Here are some pebbles… put these bellicose gestures of stone (some of which are shaped like diamonds) in your mouth so as to slaver at the bit. For Humpty-Dumpty on the wall – when talking to Alice – has yet to make his way back to its yoke after the shattering of Man. Can you take care of it?”

Heraclitus Bean: “I won’t be able to master the imponderables of such a misery (gasping).”

Topper: “You must: on pain of being put to the water torture; or at least in terms of an impediment’s bile. Any idiot who’s worth his salt has to master the lingo of a vagrant’s deceit. Because no Poor Tom can be allowed to burst upon the world mouthing the philosophy of a bush professor. Not half…”

ELEVENTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins views all of this multi-dimensionally or through a misalliance of hatred.

Sabrina…: “Don’t wait for the foretaste of a new cranium thereafter. No way – since two capable victims of mine, Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody, have been delivered to the bounty of my ken… nor are they accustomed to a grief of ages in a salutary park. Does one even care? For an autogyro drops onto a deposit of lawn nearby, with one of my beloved soldier-boys kneeling on its back projection. ‘Hail, Sabrina-Tara!’, he utters,

‘we bring you the tidings of a new dwarfdom. Ye-e-e-s-s-s…’ By virtue of the fact that I may stride out in full armour, albeit pursuant to a renewed destiny, and bursting with an unfettered eagerness for prey. Various

myrmidons, with their weapons armoured to the tilt, stand by or muster up towards silence… As 135

I, rather leisurely, take my time to descend various classical stairways – what with heavy, Grecian urns at every turn. Good-bye cruel world; don't we choose to celebrate its riches? Only those who have suited themselves to Heraclitus Bean's capture, ceteris paribus, may actually be there at a tournament of death.

Wherein the lodgement of Spartacus, in rictus, can find itself broken within the shafts of such a chariot. Especially one which is speeding to its doom over the other side of some nethermost cliffs. 'May we watch you crucify Bean, together with his attendant gnat?', leered one of my servitors. No: the honour of sacrifice goes to those who can put celerity before passion… but even then, a Venus in Furs must pronounce upon her carcass aslant a capering moon. Similarly, 'I have to deny your offerant's dish – somewhat unfortunately – and no matter how pedigree its chum. Agreed? Because only those who're cram full of capture may partake of administering pain, in relation to those who mete out various punishments… given that those stocks happen to be full presently. Truly, even broken biscuits like these betray an offering at the bottom of their crate. Yet, my fellow warriors, don't let me afflict you with uncertainty. There shall be other victories; other jubilees!'"

Scene-setting: For months and weeks now – or by dint of visiting the unachieved – a peaceful hermit known as Heraclitus Bean was transformed into a fool…. (That is: he becomes a veritable Mister Bean, if you take my meaning). Basically now, all Elisabethan and pre-Restoration comedy – in an English vein –

partook of either Jack Smart or a Jolly Jape! Can we assess this, most effectively, in an example like F. Kirkman's The Wits (circa. 1673) which speaks of England's clowns? Surely no-one may chase such cruelty to an indistinct bay? (Even though the character known as Scaramouch might serve as a neck-brace, particularly when abreast of a Ghost who earns the title of Nobody. Since his neck is capable of unscrewing to a great height, if surrounded by fops, and only in order to reveal the circumstances of Mister Nobody. Was he just an entertainer amidst rounds of 136

screed, as witnessed by George Cruikshank’s engravings from Punch and Judy?

Whopper: “Stand still before your adjunct to nakedness! Rest again, Bean, for one’s trajectory has to limit the possibility of failure – even over mumming to a sadic mime like this. You’ve got to stagger more… you must adopt the crepitating hour-glass of a cripple! Remember comrade, each freak has to find its way through a cordon of identity. You shall walk aslant of all o’Reason’s capacity, at least before adopting the white line of a blind mole… Or, almost simultaneously, are you ready to capture the achievement of one sieved opera – or a chamber piece – in terms of its atonal sound? Do you otherwise reminisce about The Second Mrs. Kong by Sir Harrison Birtwhistle?”

Topper: “Likewise, you shall have to adopt the gait of crippledom ahead of Newgate’s calendar – availably so. Always and a day, you will need to place yourself in a retard’s state of mind. Moreover… let us utilise Theodore Adorno’s notion of negative dialectics: in that no-one must pounce upon Nobody, while extemporising, so as to resemble a blank delusion afore a mirror. Is this a mask of One; or just a white hood over the head with two eye-holes?”

Whopper: “Let Punch and Judy be our illustrations or guides herein… For the Hangman has appeared from behind his mercurial settee. Needless to say, he bestrode the world less like a colossus (or a wooden figurine carved by Fred Tickner) and more after the fashion of a grave-digger with a gift for the gab!

Truly, his pate was bald, his eyes sapphire, his dress-coat, surplice and shoes black; and his demeanour rather sinister… or slightly reminiscent of the spiritual left. Does one heed the darkness of an aforementioned witness (thereby)? Since Tickner’s glove-puppet moves towards us continuously, albeit by one variant or its sleight of hand… and each tickle remains the mainstay of a new regime.

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The Hangman, with penetrating blue eyes, speaks thus: ‘Come now, Mister Punch, you will ‘ave to be hung by the neck until you are dead’, ‘Well fed’, ‘No, dead’, ‘But I’m not well read’,

‘Dead… kaput… deceased, down the plug ‘ole… kicking the bucket!’, ‘Big zero to your bucket, but I’ve got a frying pan’,

‘What for?’, ‘Sausages’…”

TWELFTH SURAH>>>

Topper: “Drool… why don’t you, my puppet? For we wish to purchase the expectancy of more spittle than cattle. Furthermore, even if you consume a sandwich in our personal calling, you must cull rheum’s plenitude so as to get through many a sleepless night. What can the wit of ages really be, if it suffers not to hang a mountebank upside down for our pains? Mayhap, it betokens prime minister Putin’s desire to hoist his Georgian rival by his testicles? Don’t they refer to such a one as a zanni in Italy’s Commedia delle ‘arte? Never mind: the real point was to skewer comic timing on our spear-tip, basically in order to outmanoeuvre a masque with a buffoon’s wit. But surely, you ask, the basic test of such tom-foolery has to be to open one’s zipper! Because undue attention to bodily functions is a comedic elixir. No sir, not necessarily: for we redeem our absence of a collar less directly, even if it happens to be a slave-collar. You see, we declare – as the keepers of your inevitable charge – that the castration of a louche comic reveals Aristophanes’ intentions.

Root-toot-toot! Let him swazzle his way out of that with a high-pitched voice…”

Meanwhile, Sabrina-Tara Tomkins looks on from afar and yet with the vagary of aeons: “Splendid… haven’t my boys done marvellously to facilitate these renewed caperings? Hail heroes, your success has to be the plenitude of a new crucifixion… I shall certainly put Bean and his fool, Nobody, to the water-torture or the ‘Great Question’ as the French once referred to it.

One must adore and serve only Ares. Observe his effigy – when 138

tucked away in this booth – or doubtless contained in some recollected granite. Yet don't just worship after the nature of Marmaduke Pickthall's translation of the Koran, rather, seek to emulate his compaction with the Caesars in order to reward death. For only those warriors who have captured the stripling, plus his midget, may earn the right to join our caravan. Hail! The feeding frenzy of our blood does well to neuter its dispersal or after-effects. Do we observe them now – albeit frozen to one's floor – or all fixed in aspic and hungering for nought save sacrifice? Both of them must share the same fate; even if it consigns them to my fiery pits. Because like Sammael – in Wyndham Lewis' tripos Malign Fiesta – I will be the juggler and saboteur who challenges flame, if only to confront it with the breath of an ice-giant's daughter."

THIRTEENTH SURAH>>>

Whopper (without further ado): "Adopt an idiotic grin which is minus a semblance of one's forethought! Do you dare to smile on amidst such available mirth? I say again… you don't look insane enough! Run those fingers – at once fashioned by malfeasance –

across the rubbery tripod of these lips! If this was not to be the case, perchance, then those digits might be guilty of self-abuse…

to use a term drawn from an Oxford English Dictionary in the

'thirties."

Colonel Ax: "May one speak of Eric Partridge's thesaurus devoted to slang?"

Topper: "Certainly not – for any spent conifers o' wonderment have been burnt out. Regardless of which, any glazed mask must give a nod towards Paul Klee's painting The Possessed Girl.

Might you reminisce about its eldritch turbulence? Anyway, Heraclitus' skull may bend on its stalk like a dandelion; or it could revolve in accordance with Peter Blatty's diction. Yet no exorcism is in a position to catch this quicksilver's fleet-o'-foot.

For do we still want to blur Richard Wagner’s notes by stretching 139

a wet sponge across them – after Schoenberg’s affectation? At least this was how an early critic reacted to his Romantic swoon…”

Colonel Ax: “But Big Head’s duty – when descending from an early Mummers’ quarrel – is to boost the idiotic towards a point of complacency.”

Whopper: “Quite so… because our laser beams, in an exemplary fashion, have to shoot the lips off Joey the Clown’s fixative –

primarily in order to reveal a dirty old master beneath the grease paint.”

FOURTEENTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “Let us examine the spawn which you will leaven to my abundant gaze! Behold thee… we should survey these unfortunate whelps with the expectancy of one’s patience. May I tilt back the head with some variously indifferent claws? But what do I really dwell upon behind these eye-slits?

Still and all, a dry amplitude is driven up to my retina – in that his orbs are dead, frigid, caged or lacking in dexterity. Surely, they come across as marbles in the face – or alternatively, each fish-eye looks like a Damien Hirst sculpture when tastefully hidden behind its glass? Curse you, poltroons, can I never receive the service which I require without necessarily crucifying my help head-down? <<In a temperature of exasperation or rage, therefore, Sabrina hurls the manikin or dummy from her… if only to discover that Bean passes through her minions, thereby knocking them to left and right. Don’t they embody so many skittles in a Somerset bar; especially when they’re thrown into a whirligig by the ball cannoning down its row? Heraclitus – in this dream’s portion – also wears aerial discs upon either foot.>>

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‘“So you did return from a Valley of the Lions (?); or were otherwise keen to impregnate such metallic furniture’, splutters my only Sybil. “Be attendant or watchful of my brief awhile”, he 140

answers, “ and essentially it has all come about in order to transport a friend. I can hardly ask you to remember that the Spastics Society had been reformulated as Scope.”

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins addresses Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody thus…: ‘Unutterable little fools! You may have come for a mild interlude, but an infinity shall be your staying gesture’.

After whichever instant, a clawed talon reaches up in order to activate a machine. Its name is Kill-Martin and it resembles an Aztec God; a formulation which was at once frozen into a mask or some other congealing power. The look on Sabrina-Tara’s forecourt, however, exudes a triumphant posture in a trice; and her visage becomes avid, zealous, harpy-like, exultant or teeth-grinding. Don’t her lips cavil in a rectangle of lip-stick; if only when suited to a breaking of the Gods’ compact?”

FIFTEENTH SURAH>>>

Colonel Ax: “Observe the majesty of one salient embrace, my fellows! In any event, you must impress upon us the visualisation of a scream! For an idiot or his savant has to reckon on a belly-aching’s due, after all. Since Dostoyevsky’s vision of one touched by lights (or The Idiot) forbears us to pay any National Insurance contributions whatsoever. Can it compute with one’s witness, necessarily so? SCREAM, I tell you – for the mask of a misfit customarily wakes up in a dotard’s arms! Didn’t even Quasimodo have his bells at the top of Notre Dame? Truly, campanology comes to be a drop-out’s last refuge! Quod, if you are to play this part like John Hirt, you’ll inevitably have to learn how to cry out in torment. Victor Hugo’s short story, The Man who Laughed, says something similar – no doubt about it.”

Whopper: “Ye-e-e-s-s-s… doesn’t the present participle of our Punch and Judy show allude to these mistakes? Now then: let us watch on from the

rear of this booth – with its red and yellow awnings – and consider some more of those damnable wraiths.

For instance, here gambols one crocodile in particular…”

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Topper: “Is he disenchanted with being a dragon?”

Whopper: “No, it’s a crocodile, I say. Listen to me, wretches of Albion, and learn wisdom thereby… because a prolonged croc(.) opens his mouth so as to extend a ‘fetish’ or its circus-tent.

Similarly, its mouth remains open or otherwise severed as to a trick, and it’s able to prick itself over a bloody source. Do you notice its inflagrante delicto caprice? Certainly, the play on one circus medley has cause to pronounce on its development…

since the world’s oldest farce or Mummers’ sprite has never been only a puppet’s demeanour, do you know? For before Piccini there lay various marionettes, the Mummers’ plays, Mediaeval mystery cycles and transplanted off-shoots of the Commedia dell’arte – each one listing to every other wind. Human beings mouthed parts aplenty then; at least afore summoning up one’s recognition in order to fight a dragon outside a tent. Perhaps it would be best to bring in Tintoretto here; in a scenario wherein St. George battles the Dragon against a lowering sky?”

(Both of these engineers of the lower mind address Heraclitus Bean directly, but this time he’s wearing the mask of Mister Nobody – the idiot).

Whopper and Topper find themselves speaking together, or rather crowned by a customary ignorance. (Why must we shorten this distance or its tele-photo lens?): “Mightn’t you wish to try this glove-puppet on for size? Remember – only the left-hand masquerades anything in terms of the cloven hoof or its indifference. Let it ride for a moment: since one pregnant aporia within such an awning creates monsters – and these are not really the ‘sleep of reason’ out of Goya! No. Punch always dominates the stage over to the left, as you look at it from the outside-in.

But this was (also) by virtue of the fact that the Professor customarily wears him on the right-hand. Once the puppet has been drawn on – at least in terms of a gauntlet – Mister Punch may never be cast off until the show draws to its climax or end 142

(leastwise). Do you register a market for his available distaste (?); after the admonishment of Hermes – the Greek god of wisdom and magic. To be sure: Professor Cornford once averred over whether Punch and Judy went back to Attic comedy – by dint of nothing less clumsy than a straight line."

Mister Nobody now chooses to act the part of Bean or a divine child: "May I?"

Whopper plus Topper speak together now: "Be our ready guest, my spas(.) of ages, particularly if you're pursuant to the violence of an arrested motion. Again, will your eye occasionally denote a marble that's dead to its locution – or possibly void? Consider this argument: once the glove-puppet closes over his fingers it takes on a whole new territory of life. Does it embarrass us within the semblance of a renewed 'penetration' into death? See here, comrades of the revolution, the glazed look which we must discern in yonder eyes cannot be replicated by this reptile."

Heraclitus Bean/Mister Nobody: "I am faithful to the loss of my personhood or its spirited essence. For – when I encounter this crocodile upon the sleeve – it bursts forth in order to challenge my unsteady bit. Its bark has to be worse than its bite, depending, and as soon as it's levered upon one's arm it leaps out across a plenitude of space. Do we forsake the portmanteau advice of such an utterance? Since when attached to its necessary digits, (my watchers), it disembarks – if only to triple jump or soar. Are you aware that this glove took up the Devil's roadshow on a particular stage? Mightn't one have been the replacement of the other – albeit at a later date? Because once it's on one's raw fingers, you never wanted it to leave off. No… Certainly when it can pounce like an apple in sun-rise; at once bursting towards the shore or otherwise dappled with yellow: plus a mouth that teems avec dinosaur's teeth. May we even speak of a diaphragm?

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All of it’s due to the fact that my head bore about it a sound trajectory – adjacent to some red – and previously illumined by shimmering gold. Agreed, once this biting green-noddle – when held up by a stick – had struck loose you never wanted it to end its quarter’s rest. Despite the evidence over whether Punch’s baton – or multiple rounds of sausages – became lodged between these shanks.”

Whopper: “Truly, once an emerald sheath is fastened one rarely seeks out rest. Will it ever really swallow Punch’s stick after a terrible bit of business?”

Topper: “He’s an enfant terrible – as witnessed by Jean Cocteau

– you mean?”

Whopper: “No, we’ve had to manufacture a child out of an idiot

– at least before he became one. This is why – when adjacent to a spinning top – he won’t leave off his toy.”

Topper: “He’ll learn a due sense of progeny; if only Punch and Judy purists can claim that our crocodile represents Lucifer on the prowl. Quietly goes it, monkey…”

SIXTEENTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara surveys her purgatory from a celestial seat:

“Behold, my winged charioteers have fallen down a man-hole!

Shall I relieve him of his undoubted burden or its pain?

Unjustifiably so, his make-shift jump had cascaded into a crater in my consciousness. Still, no aero-discs can help his ascent now

– at least not when atoms crackle at the redoubt of his resource.

Are they swarming termagants from the unforgiving air? Let us see… since a fit or heroic Heraclitus Bean, together with his familiar Nobody, have slid downstairs into a very deep pit. Is one aware of that scene in William Hogarth's Southwark Fair (?); where Punch trundles his wife, Judy, towards Hades' flames… A sure echo (this) of those mediaeval mystery plays of contrary 144

years and pieces! Never mind: the real point remains those tourneys of suffocation under which they labour. Harken! Does some fiendish machinery – or its diverse circuitry and channels –

choose to trap them in their downwards course? For are they heading down through multi-dimensional zones – or an Interzone

– towards the labyrinth of a plexiglass cage? Look you! These doors open and shut within such crystalline slides; or alternately they're various rumours to a scant intrigue – the like of which comes minus those aero-discs that are no longer engaged."

Heraclitus Bean: "Quick, Nobody… I have to recall everything ever known about Sabrina-Tara Tomkins (formerly). Why did she build these cybernetic pits – if not to force the pace of evolutionary change? May it almost be given the currency of Konrad Lorenz's On Aggression… a treatise or doctoral thesis on vitalist bias? Anyway, doesn't she believe in dysgenic swiftness in order to achieve a goal? A situation wherein Evolution X

furnishes a point of departure… primarily so as to achieve maximum impact under its torment circuits! What say you, little one? Can the insights of Gaius Cibber's Bedlam – when cast in stone – not really mature in order to render apoplexy moot? Do you detect a metronome's beat here (?); the latter swivelling around an eye or distended over its norms. This is let alone any rootedness in one's cornea – if we but face it."

Nobody (for his part): "Fee…fie, fo…fum: Poor Tom's a'cold; and will her brow's delicate chiselling fall into the flame? Or can each issue wrap itself in rags; if only to cement a coinage and smash through one's undergrowth? Does anyone recognise my crown of thorns? I'm the King of Sweden.

Welcome to my mathematical theorem… (says he; while dribbling continuously from his mouth).

SEVENTEENTH SURAH>>>

Whopper: “Any training pursuant to a discourse of discomfort is over now. Do you recognise its vapours or mephitic gases? For 145

every sneeze, scream, howl, egestion, bout of imbecilic drooling, glazed eye and foolish grin merely keeps apart the lips of Glastonbury’s unRomance… no matter how fecklessly! In any event – or to furnish a shifting tide – Heraclitus Bean comes to be ready for your inspection, Colonel. We have worked on his delinquency for months; thereby enabling him to become unreconciled to his past. Might he be the leprous mendicant within the gate; and definitely so? Look here… he staggers with a shambolic willingness – at once broken to his mast – or basically hurling an unnamed bottle into the sea, (most capably).

May there be a message engulfed within its compass, or held in a green-glass? Namelessly so… Moreover, the breaking down of our specimen – in accordance with behavioural remedies –

proves to be socialism’s ready elixir. Can our dirigisme denote a story-book romance, like Doctor Seuss in reverse, which is based on the smashing of a thousand skulls? Do you remember the title of Jack London’s ‘third positionist’ novel, The Iron Heel?”

Colonel Ax: “Granted: the former’s memorial could have been a statement over a tertiary posture. But, to my mind, it improves with every perusal – save when I compare it to the amputations of Johnny Got His Gun by Dalton Trumbo. Dare one rekindle an Ouija board and its losses, or a template which tends to endorse the diktat of Senator Joe McCarthy’s committee?”

Topper: “An assembly that hunted subversion and Anti-Americanism, you mean?”

Colonel Ax: “Quite so: we loathe the United States and all its works. But COME FORWARDS, state your business, comrades… and let us stare into the ‘wet look’ of a renewed cadaver. Necessarily so, since the unripeness of this crab apple shall poison the lot! Again, an effigy we create must endorse the Elephant Man more than any wickerman going.”

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“HRRMPPH! (Colonel Ax inspects Heraclitus Bean in Nobody’s guise.) Bring him closer to my face – I will have to stare into a visage whose proximity to Homo Erectus makes life easier to bear. Couldn’t he charm the socks off a slogan which says, in a junkie’s diction, that life is a fix? Most agreeably, he incarnates a feeling for Fred Tickner’s puppet known as the Blackman or Jim Crow. Wasn’t he a bandy-legged Negroid? For in Punch and Judy no ‘political correctness’ can stain an atmosphere which is made out of wood and methane. Have you ever consulted the Nobel laureate Professor Eugene Shockley, the transistor’s aide-de-camp, on Eugenics and Race? Inevitably though, you can hold this puppet before your eyes, and it betokens a black-and-white minstrel show or its form seems beholden to such a sport of kings. Perhaps we have a token of Eckermann’s Voodooism and the Negroid Religions, but without any ‘sinister’ undertones whatsoever in Conan Doyle’s diction? Herein, only a tar baby’s humour reigns throughout. Aren’t you aware that the notion of Jim Crow originates from a music hall turn – way back in 1836 –

by the Scottish artiste Tom Rice? Because these gloved fingers prove to be bug-spectral, infantile, crestfallen, thick-lipped and sooty after Robinson’s Marmalade. Surely they exist as a refutation of James Baldwin’s thesis – namely, that there will be no fire next time? For, and tilting with entropy’s grain, it relates much more to The Bell Curve than C.L.R. James’ Minty Alley in Barbados. Do you recollect the Jim Crow song?”

“He sings: ‘ Revolve, why don’t ya, turn on your heel, Be slow to go, be sure to throw… Jim Crow’.

“What now, then? Doesn’t Mister Punch – when heralding his red cap and bell – rear up from behind the stage? He recounts the following alibi: ‘Ho-hum, take a bit of this, Jim!’ Blackman:

‘Shallaballa’. Punch, laughing and roaring, proceeds to knock him down. Obviously, there’s no time for a ditty in this particular set or routine. ‘Root-toot-toot… that’s the way to do it!’ Perhaps, on a far bush or by a swaying aspen, a waa-Golly is seen to twist 147

amid some golden light. It betokens a Klavern’s effulgence that hangs in deep shadow around its spray… May this twitching silhouette actually be on fire? Mightn’t it also illustrate a rendezvous with D.W. Griffith’s account of a nation’s birth (?)

… most definitely so. Or could it be an albino example of the Spirit’s side-kick, Ebony, when taken care of by Will Eisner?

Here we have a scenario where Lothrop Stoddard’s thesis has been blanked out from the ‘twenties onwards. Although, alternatively speaking, a blanched resolution should have occurred already, a scenario in which Tom Wolfe’s Last Man was definitely a lighter shade of pale.”

EIGHTEENTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Heraclitus Bean and his companion, Nobody, are yet to fathom the recesses of their box… at least under the supervision of Sabrina-Tara Tomkins. May it have occasion to recall The Room’s dimensions – a decadent cuboid by Hubert Selby Junior? Can its plasticity be rendered neutral, thereafter?

Or do they possibly share the centrality of Damien Hirst’s shark,

‘The physical impossibility of death in the mind of someone living’, (1991)? Yet aren’t they basically within a plexiglass shield, the unnumbered doors of which close upon them without a click?

Heraclitus Bean: “Poor Tom – or Mister Nobody in another guise

– be silent now, I beg your witness o’ yore. For everything I know about Sabrina-Tara Tomkins has to be raised to the forefront of my mind. Might we locate in particular the insecurities of an aged brain… basically one that’s lost to serenity’s absence or gloats over presents and gifts? Perhaps we perceive them to be the sweet-meats of a lost carcass… rather like the Greek Cypriot version of delight? Surely they come in the form of jelly – or tungsten rare – with an outside sprinkled by icing sugar? No matter how it’s been otherwise divorced…”

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Mister Nobody: “Sprinkle the down of corpsedom over my compendium – dear heart! Reach out, my lovelies, to a rival reek, hey bonny ho, Poor Tom’s a hot; especially given my relocation to a steamy bedroom in the company of a winsome whore. What a format! Root-toot-toot! While the surprising element about wearing body-armour is that one’s chastity remains unaffected.

Be it ever so mad or nay; the question twinkles on unlimbered…”

Heraclitus Bean: “Assuredly, let’s grant you the acclimatisation of your own folly – particularly when its grown lethargic over the Gods’ disinterest. On this premiss, then, and with a chocolate bounty (hitherto) we shall stake our lives.”

<<Plus – and with no affectation whatsoever – Bean reaches out to a torment circuit consisting of nothing but studs. They are connected to a miniscule steel plate in one wall. Is it my imagination… or does a U.S. warplane of yesteryear, a P-47M

Thunderbolt, fly by within one’s inner mind?>> NINETEENTH SURAH>>>

Colonel Ax: “Most remarkably, comrades… when one surveys Heraclitus Bean we notice that a face dots the permutations of another’s eyes. Mightn’t it duplicate a visigoth by Balthus?

Wherein pubescent teenage girls flaunt themselves in rooms (nakedly); whilst dwarves lurk under-cover with a delicate hand to probe unseen. Won't it have trouble in returning to a jury's-out plot by Jerzy Kosinski? And this is no matter the puzzlement of that Moloch – the Holocaust industry – as belittled by Finkelstein without any seriousness whatsoever."

Whopper: "My excellency, here are two photogravures for you to look at; both of them appear to be delicate over their off-tone or its transparency. Yes… for we remain owl-like in our taloned affront to such knowledge. Why don't you compare these two pictures – Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody – after our 149

torturing of the one into the other… Could even the late Albert Camus demarcate a plague like this in Oran? (Whether or not we were to consult Michael Ayrton's representational foray afterwards…)

Colonel Ax: "No way, comrade medico… I cannot tell them apart – not now or in an available month of Sundays. For the first page of this vellum comes to us in a distinct manner; when written, as it will be, on the percussive instrument of this hermit's skin. Indeed – friends – your transformation waxes perverse in its way. Didn't Kafka succeed in converting an insurance clerk into a beetle? Most clearly… yet, in this case, any monument to Man's limitations must leave a trail of spore behind it."

Topper (gabbling rather fast): "Further out-breaks in this drama muster themselves aplenty. First, we shall parachute him into enemy territory. Second, one mock-idiot will replace the reality of another's kindred. Third, the real Mister Nobody may find his course abjectly terminated by us. Fourth, our war department slays him outright. Fifth, one's secret agent, Heraclitus Bean, then begins reporting back to us on enemy formations from behind their lines. His role happens to be crucial in all this –

because Heraclitus' reclusive trunk, mind and body are already formed (if not linked to us by auto-suggestion). Sixth, the town called Kubla-rebok or Nonesuch lies at the heart of our future imperialism. Fundamentally, we can dominate it through his Ouija board manipulations, don't you understand?"

Colonel Ax: "Very good… our party leaves tonight. Victory hail!"

<<Yet neither Ax or the two parsimonious psychiatrists, Whopper and Topper, bother to look at Heraclitus Bean. They fail to comprehend that he's broken/subject to the warping-and-wefting of personality, or been turned into a shambling man-150

thing! Have these secret policemen, morally speaking, succumbed to the colourlessness of pure research a la Moreau?

Do they detect the inner code of zionism's holocaust in Gaza?>>
TWENTIETH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: In a rival dimension or its twilight's duty, Sabrina Tara-Tomkins rocks back and forwards on an available chair.

Could it be a child's rocking-chair which has been adapted to an adult purport or use? Regardless of which, she sways in an undulating motion with a goblet of fine viands occasionally rising to her lips. On appeal though, one can say that she was witnessing the notice of an oubliette too far. Is it a recognised statement, thus? Against this nostrum – a guard stoops before her reach avec a glistening box on a conch-like tray. It glimmers astir an abundance of light motets; having been placed on a side-table or its pouffe. Might it besport five limbs – or staves – of a necessary teak: plus one of this handful off to a captain's side?

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: "Look at the commanding miracle of this indulgence… and just see how those capering oafs, Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody, must be suffering now! It's such a pity that they couldn't see things Macha's way, or in accord with a relevant incline/plane. For all pelts must be alleviated through an oblivion of rain – oh my yes! In concert with such a sense of pity, the concertina of the beast has to assert itself like a bishop in chess… particularly when it's moving diagonally across the board. Mightn't it involve the hospitality of an aforementioned crone? For, in my negative aspect, I have come to incarnate the impact of Kali or Chamunda (possibly). Here – in my solitary abundance – I can dance or swoon upon an ambit of skulls…

albeit with only a cowering mortal truckling in my wake. Let's behold my skeletal mien – avec the sword raised over a sandstone's head – and my

jewellery composed of bone-plus-snakes (withal). Does my image become sanctified; or otherwise relevant to its ninth century origins in Orissa?”

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To whichever or like diatribe – her accompanying acolyte can only nod in asseveration.

TWENTY-FIRST SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: A plane passes across the heavens and it’s speeding to its destination. It has to be painted a light blue (essentially) and the sky around it swirls with a kaleidoscope of purple. While a perfectly formed or oval-like moon transfixes every backdrop with a white disc. Suddenly two men who’re prone to a harness become discernible in their parachutes – they are adrift of much cumulus. Their names were Colonel Ax and Major Tree-bend; and each of them is dressed in combat fatigues that’re green in colour.

Major Tree-bend <<who’s shouting over the engine’s noise>>:

“Don’t ever fear the fatiguing utterance of misstatement, my Colonel. For Heraclitus Bean – our secret agent – totally affects the role he’s adopted. Nor could anyone really describe it as method acting – not entirely. No. But he does remain in one theoretical vogue… without either a shock or some tittle-tattle of Stanislavski. Since our accustomed madman – or Poor Tom a’

bedlam amid Lear’s heath – perfectly commandeers his part.”

Colonel Ax: “You believe that it shall be a triumphant spear for our espionage agency or its circuit?”

Major Tree-bend: “Most assuredly, he bears upon his body the smack of our primary adulteration. Yes sir, like an old-fashioned radio (or even a handsome Leyden jar) a homing-pigeon will re-route his information back to our hungry mouths.”

Colonel Ax: “Do tell: for the scamp of our witness wants to save any available cadres. Whereas this spy may never challenge the currency of our

investment – whilst sending back gold-dust prior to its minting (necessarily). Furthermore – are you sure that he preponderates in his steps (?); at once waxing lyrical over a tarantella or one of Bejart's penumbras. May he doubtless feel 152

afflicted – or rather graven over time – and thus liable to tread on von Laban's toes? Could it come to reconnoitre a vehicle of light deceit, thereafter?"

Major Tree-bend: "Comrade, you speak the truth about a wonderful cobra which rests on its Indian scales; and finds itself worshipped in concord with a dictation of five heads. Yet rest assured, this mole can be our version of Graham Greene's

'unquiet American' who savours nought of the grave. And –

despite one special tincture – he shall send few notes of the compass with him except the nonchalance of Braille. Yet these effectively register what we might wish to witness."

Colonel Ax: "Come again? My fellow socialist or revolutionary, it was all seen before in B. Traven's fable Treasure of the Sierre Madre; at least in terms of a peon's just servitude… the latter being sent by Morse code or even a 'special delivery'! Still, let him accede to a psychiatrist's advice… for behind Punch's mask of Attic comedy all we require are notes of binary information, military secrets and enemy troop movements. Hasn't he already been parachuted behind the Whiteguards' lines?"

Major Tree-bend: "Aye… Moreover, any of our pilots who have been shot down must be sent back in double quick time. An occurrence which lacks any infamy whatsoever – especially in terms of its double entendres…"

TWENTY-SECOND SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Queen Sabrina continues to sway back-and-forth on her golden apron, the former proving to be a ricocheting pediment that rests beneath her feet. A curtain (of fine cloth or muslin) is possibly folded

against itself in the near distance. Can one suspect any defiance of this interviewer?

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “The suffering of the innocent necessarily depends on a prior fortitude or its disrepair. Do not 153

forget it… since any evolutionary prospect has to afflict the entire species as a form of forgetting. Let a statue devoted to Kali’s memory be our guide-post here… for she stands aloof or ahead of all ritual, and before the others. Does she wear a crown of a typically Bengali type – the latter over naked breasts –

together with a circular necklace of human heads which have been dysgenically severed? Also, will S(h)iva lie recumbently beneath her – in order for the God to achieve his full potential through union with a daemonic mate?”

An accompanying soldier (or an acolyte most bare) speaks up:

“Never fear to waver the fortune of those cowards underneath you! But one may seek solace, O mistress, by what you have brought forth from your vault.” [Might this servitor – who bears so many gifts – fail to betoken Major Tree-bend in another dimension?]

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “My myrmidons or special forces are so understanding; especially given a template of forgiveness’

training. Yet Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody are going through torment – ‘neath our veriest soles – and this was solely to articulate the wonder of an evolutionary prospect. I choose to call it Evolution X – a faculty of unknown recognition in terms of Colin Wilson’s The Occult. If these mortals are ever to advance, they must be put under pressure to do so! Because the ironing out of such creases comes about using heat… and only then do we find ourselves free to absorb the osmosis of a new becoming. Take away one’s stimulation to grow and there can be nothing but defeat! Do you die, an attentive votary at my shrine, if you cut your finger-nails?”

TWENTY-THIRD SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: All four of these fountains of youth – Colonel Ax, Major Tree-bend and the two officers known collectively as ‘the Swine’ – survey the idiot’s cottage. It exists – without any circumspection whatsoever – at the heart of Nonesuch. You see, 154

Mister Nobody’s den subsists at Kubla-rebok’s heart… dare you take its message on board?

Colonel Ax (with a finger to his lips): “Hush now – heed not the interior of this mechanism’s duality. There lies the imbecile’s dwelling in the half-light; and it seems to be recumbent over its foretaste o’ cool. Most assuredly… because the lights have gone off in this street’s purple markings; when they’re next to the yellow-glare that beams from a grave’s window. Declare it now: let’s creep around this tabernacle’s back or break in silently like a peep o’ day boy – and then slide open an aperture to allow in Banquo’s ghost. Oh yes; our spastic’s point of view involves perishing before a new dawn’s blade.”

<<Once inside a rotter’s cube they are foisted with a haunch of venison a la Bacon… and it’s rather like the ‘progressive’ art gallery at the heart of London town.>> Captain Tomb Gooseflesh: “Yonder poltroon sleeps like a babe; albeit if rendered ‘fast’ in his rhapsody of a false awakening!

Dare one reckon to the truth of it! Knife him now, but don’t forget the rapture of a deluded plastinate by Gunter von Hagens.

Subsequent to which – does the Skeleton of one forgiveness appear behind Punch or otherwise beholden to his chuntering?

Look now, a white glow looms when congruent to a mist, at least before disappearing (…) It is a glove-puppet that’s marked

‘Skeleton No. 1’ – what with a rib-cage which was exposed to a withering purview or conceit. On it moves while adjacent to Punchinello – at once leaving the children out front to scream –

as it marks time with ease. It (the Skeleton) bobs to one side and then another; albeit becoming creased in terms of an indentured skull. Whilst

Mister Punch swirls around and about – when breasted (simultaneously) to a new incidence of Blue; and failing to come to terms with all those he's beaten to death (maybe)? Why do those integers insist in following such a caravan? Yes, it's all true, madam: since Punch has pummelled 155

the following gloves with his joy-stick: and they are Judy, the Doctor, one priest in particular, Joey (occasionally), Lucifer, a Negro and the Beadle. Yes sir… no action can really absolve him from striking out at Big Head; especially in terms of those ancient Mummers' rituals of yesteryear."

Colonel Ax: "Shush, my brethren… for now comes our occasioned right to strike. Avaunt all witnesses of non-performance (thereby)! Most certainly, the striking down of a village idiot must indicate a spiritual liveliness amongst our number. Do you correctly signal its limbering up? Listen to me: he (Mister Nobody) expectorates before a dwindling fire, his limbs are cast askew, his breath doubtless leaves off and one unambiguous eye peeps out… as if it's almost severed from the license of such a swamp. For these lunatics haven't taken over the asylum, no, when pursuant to Gaius Cibber's rendition of distress outside Bedlam's old sanctity in south London.

Doubtlessly instead, the easiest way to outlive such torment involves pouncing together… collectively speaking. Can a subtraction like this correctly view its own deletion? Quietly comrades, one tip-toes earnestly towards a future corse with one's left-foot forwards… plus a hunting-crop in one's hand or maybe even minus a knife. Softly, softly, catchee monkey…"

Master Sergeant Asphalt Ray: "Most definitely, we are left with the position where no ape bounds on stage during Punch and Judy. Yet often, the absence of Man's familiar may hint at even darker silhouettes; particularly given Hanuman's obscene grin in those shadows. Because a tiny aspect of spittle continues to dribble from this tramp's mouth – above all, when he happens to be trapped (as he is) within the nettle of a necessary sleep. Given these indicators, might it be possible to tell the future from a falling stack of cards? Needless to say, we approach the Bedlamite expectantly or on tenter-hooks… but Punch remains aslant our body of men or even ahead of us in a

studio’s vista. He romps within the callow advent of so many ground-hogs – each 156

one of them salient over its own loss. Here he comes now or again; while basically tittering and laughing all the way back to a redundant caper (never mind its piggy-bank). Do you detect his apparition rearing up before you or next to a pregnant booth (?); if not otherwise unintended aslant an awning most rare. See how he extends his wooden hands – if only to indicate his understanding of an audience’s absence. Meanwhile, Judy levitates onto the stage or its balsa patch; and her parsimony seems to be shrewish in its hectoring appeal. Don’t you realise (any ‘sexist’ or feminist ingots aside) that her nagging scree brings forth a house-fire, even possibly a beating?”

Colonel Ax: “Altogether now, men, transfix your blades up and against a scarecrow’s ramp most congealed. Can’t you understand whether Gillette is really the best a man can get?

Cover his head with the blanket… primarily so as to conceal or smother any outcry! All for one and one for all – just stab him until he’s wet through, begorrah. In the name of our proletarian republic, strike and have done!”

<<All depending, then, each of these four marauders plunges in his dagger… and every knife finds itself cast deep into a reprobate’s body. Mister Nobody writhes up in resultant agony –

when mummified by a surrounding sheet – and swazzling out nought save a private gurgle. His hands and feet are momentarily convulsed as a result.>>

Mr. Nobody groans a sibilant sigh: “OooooH! AaaaaH!”

Colonel Ax: “Kill the vagrant! Yes… yes… yes. Plunge in your poniards and acknowledge the morality of bone (once tenderised). What ecstasy…! For aren’t we most free when we’re delousing the inferior in accordance with an edict of statal pardon? Like Caligula, we must emphasise a divine infantilism; if only to witness the fact that prior to seven years of age we remain animals… any necessary sense of discipline aside. Check 157

his aberrant pulse-rate – or any coagulation of the nerves and blood. Do they sever our understanding of Mach's materialism, comrade? Since no effigy to scare away crows can outlive his usefulness; at least when tucked away on the margins of Farmer Jones' fields. (Wasn't he the distant or 'Tsarist' figure in Animal Farm?) Leastways, this is so when such a rag-man finds himself confronted with a flaming brand, or one's agency of pitch."

Captain Tomb Gooseflesh: "Negative, my masters… quod it often refers to a pump-action o' zero! No trace of a torpedo in these nerves then remains. All of this happens to be dead, crepuscular, deceased or void. Doesn't the clanging point of his veins serve to restrict such an issue? Assuredly, one can declare (with King Lear) that our poor fool is dead! May he hang from a gibbet over and above Cordelia's misted glass?"

Colonel Ax: "No way, comrade, for such folly betokens a bourgeois indulgence which cannot be tolerated. And – moreover

– death's instinct has to be one of laughter at those japes that fail to follow its lead. Are you aware of the anarcho-nihilist roots which underpin a blackshirted Totenkopf?"

Master Sergeant Asphalt#Ray: "Huzza, huzza, the idiot falls flat or asunder at our command! But unlike Poe's The Tell-Tale Heart, we have to consider a case where a quivering aorta beats, semi-continuously, from down beneath those wooden boards…

no matter how absent-mindedly."

TWENTY-FOURTH SURAH>>>

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: "How those two poltroons of my destiny, Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody, will be afflicted now. Can such suffering have a redemptive edge – as Richard Wagner once intoned in Parsifal? I prefer to see it (instead) as a wager against entropy, collapse or decay. Surely Francis Galton briefly gambled contrary to a persevering spider – in Walt Whitman's diction? But my soldier-boys are so understanding… and they

know that one must tunnel outwards or towards the solar heat in an unpalsied way. Might it properly reinvigorate a sun-flower –

albeit with those maddened petals seeming to be reminiscent of chrome-yellow?”

Major Tree-bend’s alter ego or an attendant soldier: “Indeed, Sabrina-Tara Tomkins’ magic – amid the maelstrom of its ready death – enables me to earn my pointy-helmet. Let one chthonian undertone mushroom out or find itself replete with an erotic formula… After all, didn’t the characters in Attic comedy or mime often have a false phallus attached to their heads?”

(Throughout this interview, though, the officer covers his face with a golden mask. For – rather like the old man in the mountain who founded the Assassins’ sect – he could have been leprous

‘neath such a screen. ‘Twas it a case of ormolu masking the blue-bottle sanctity of a green livery?)

TWENTY-FIFTH SURAH>>>

Colonel Ax: “Rip out those floorboards over here, my comrades, so as to manoeuvre this spastic’s corse down beneath such fibres.

Might this be an example drawn from beyond Scope’s Limits!

Ha! Nonetheless, all of those who are beckoned to go down beneath the loam bring a canvas to mind (of sorts). Could it serve to underscore the German painting by Michael Pacher; wherein a horned devil holds open a prayer book for Saint Wolfgang? Not entirely so… since Baal’s anus depicts about it the topsy-turvy world of a mediaeval carnival. Surely now, its depiction won’t bring Gilbert & Sullivan into the equation as well?”

Captain Tomb Gooseflesh: “My fellow officers, place beneath these spiral-staircases the convulsed limbs of one ex-maniac.

Release him hither… by Gad! Yet look on how our fellow operative Nonesuch (or Nobody) dwells upon this scene…

mentally speaking. Does it bring back to us – at least momentarily – a figure from that play by Howard Brenton, the 159

neo-communist playwright? A dramaturge where the murderer Christie rises from a den of rubbish at a later date or at the stage's rear. Will he wear a facial filter; itself blocking out one's rubber transparency o' flesh?"

Master Sergeant Asphalt#Ray: "Anyway, our stick-man looks on with an abandoned livery (withal); and he definitely understands our jack-in-the-box gesture in matters of blood. May it prompt further gestations in our own mind – especially if they happen to be pursuant to frenzy? It certainly communes – psychically speaking – with what Colin Jordan once called a train of thought.

Again: the grape-fruit in this chosen grenade can explode in a thousand-and-one pieces! (Even though our wastrel has to crawl along one's ground, a slug to its withered leaf). Had he ever heard of a situationist text, the one which advocated A Revolution in Everyday Life… do you think?"

Colonel Ax: "Never mind such 'filth' as that – since our Bean requires every accoutrement to be mustered together. For he possesses (in a manner like a mole or an ant-eater) various code-books, two-way radios, money in coinage and notes… as well as weapons. A superlative job is expected from you – my active idiot! In all truth, the town known as Kubla-rebok or Nonesuch matters not a jot; but it straddles enemy communications. So! We shall necessitate an excellent hand at Goren's bridge, therefore.

Fulfil your task, my bumbler, and make sure that our wine-cup's half full – not empty."

Heraclitus Bean replies in the affirmative to his commander; yet his eyes slide out of his skull as he does so.

TWENTY-SIXTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: Mister Nobody – at once minute and digitalised –

wrestles in a torment circuit together with his companion-in-arms, Heraclitus Bean. Sabrina-Tara Tomkins sits above them at first; even though Bean continues to control deliverance's advent 160

with his fingers. Look at this… a gush of fire engulfs them and it circles towards bravery's ring, but it now gives up within a plenitude of after-shave or silent cinema. This (in turn) helps to complete an ambit of non-identity; if only to find – resultantly –

that sheer flame was replaced by an electrical energy which boomed towards its last. Must one's sight be directed at her cleavage's duct?

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins (scornfully): "How they suffer and deserve their fate beneath me! All such ingrates have to bear comparison with the Gods' frustrations – most assuredly. Yet by rocking back-and-forth in this chair between-times – do I succeed in healing the amplitude of their warning? Certainly, I seem to remember that Saddam Hussein's secret police was called the instrument of yearning. Against this, though, any blue-skinned

'dive' into such an abattoir must alleviate its saving grace. To be sure: as I sit here guzzling Korelian wine (and she suits the gesture to the deed) I acknowledge that my corset happens to be an iron-maiden! Furthermore, all of those undergoing torment are just the fuel of a renewed awakening. Indeed, yon Cassius was right in Julius Caesar: the future lies not in the stars but in one's self! Let's behold an X-factor in our understanding of evolution… because only by quickening the pace or by using a downwards pressure can we move from Darwin to Lamarcke (even Lysenko). Yes, most truly: since today's star-chamber remains the forcing-house of a biological cell!"

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Scene-setting: Do these two figures (Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody) continue to swirl within a star-chamber of pain?

Necessarily so… quod a newly diagnosed electrical energy helps to skewer them. It also illustrates a cycle of shock when bereft of other medicine – and is liable to illustrate its utterance or squelch. May they scream within

the maximisation of this breach? Most definitely, one skeletal hand can now play dice with itself – almost to the point of pitching up a triple six!

Further: this familiarity might be etched within the luridness of 161

Czech gothic – where, in the Wittingau altar, a red wraith leaves the illusion of a tomb; if only to fracture a semblance of absent time. Mightn't we see in this transformation a hint of Evolution X… as heralded by our gorgon? Yes or no?

TWENTY-SEVENTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: several months have passed.

Colonel Ax (speaking of events already undone or twinned):

"Listen to my aggrieved counsel, comrades! All hasn't gone well with our limited prospects or its conspiracy behind enemy lines.

First, our hopes of an espionage success have proved to be unpopular with fate… at least according to Colin Forbes' The Endless Game. Likewise, the information relayed back to us by Heraclitus Bean has been inaccurate. On one occasion Master-Sergeant Asphalt#Ray, with a platoon of dedicated volunteers, was led into a trap. Whether it resulted from involuntary or direct treachery, we know not… But here – when against a brick wall of transparent blue – these patriots met their doom or martyrdom, and they were dressed in camouflage fatigues of a webbed-brown. 'Back, back', screamed our Master-Sergeant in his last moments – what with bullets cracking around him or exploding on the stone. 'Our co-ordinates have been released to the Enemy ahead of time… nor need it relate to an example of Wyndham Lewis' proems on Art'. He died not just with his boots on, but revolver-in-hand.

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Similarly, some of our pilots or airmen – including that rigged up

‘Biggles’ Captain Tomb Gooseflesh – are known to have entered his cabin. Do we suppose that a wooden door lay ajar to receive them? It came to reflect back on Heraclitus Bean in a fire’s light

– or was another agency at work? Never mind it: since our comrades congratulated themselves in the following terms, ‘Ah!

A griddle… warm food or sucking pig tossed by the pitch of its spatula’. Moreover, our aces high were dressed in airman’s uniforms avec goggles, flying caps, epaulettes, gauntlets and like 162

kindred… even though the mural behind them waxes towards purple in its indifference. Yet, still more and more, Bean looms up aslant of an aperture which glows redder and redder with haemoglobin’s séance. Is he not ragged, bereft, scarecrow like or otherwise afflicted in his spiritual usage? Surely such a ragamuffin can only be described as a ‘victim’ (?) – far less as a mage of some fantastic grief. But a teak door contrived to close on our pilots forever after.”

Does Colonel Ax – in concord with the doctrine of Evolution X –

register a dagger in his mind’s-eye? It slithers over; at once richly laden with aporia and pregnant with despair between dimensions. Who can really tell the truth, eh?

TWENTY-EIGHTH SURAH>>>

Scene-setting: May we illumine a furtherance of such discord?

For no sooner has a voltaic discharge left off than both Heraclitus Bean and Mister Nobody start drowning in a muddy lake. This static tumult then lifts up from the ether; if only to configure a kaleidoscope of magnesium blue. Will it reassemble (somewhat necessarily) one of those glass cubes of a magical import – often dignifying a Russian scene? Anyway, an oozing plenitude of mud rises up amidships, and it drags both of them down into a man-thing’s pasture or grip. (Even though Heraclitus Bean – in an act of charity – lifts his mad companion over his head so as to preserve his breath from the tide). Furthermore, and irrespective of such a calculus, a trail of

liquid earth skims off his boot in sundry gobbets or sods. Can Heraclitus Bean reach the escape module in time; basically in order to activate a fresh circuit?

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Never mind… since Sabrina-Tara Tomkins remains complacent on the surface of her lake or destiny. After stroking a soldier-boy's head, she studies her wine goblet with renewed violence or absolution.

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Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: "Praise be, by Moloch and Macha… or mightn't a dung-god lie lightly on my outraged brow? Because, all considerations of past enmity aside, I should encourage a fastidious glimmer of pathos… but never the ripe enactment of any self-pity! No. By such criterion as that, my warriors, lies the cowardice of liberal humanism. After all, one must have occasion to evince the morality of a white samurai: where continuous struggle has to be life's legacy or goal. Could it amount to a version of Happy Days without a balding husband in one's sand-pit, a la Samuel Beckett? Look at me… am I really content with a victory's peace? Have I been inevitably good, having laboured long and sought out all the right details – by Tyr's gift? Was this why young Loki offered me such a wondrous present? (During this soliloquy, she stares fixedly at her casket on a damask cushion…) For all I need to do is ask a favour of Kill-Martin and it materialises… factually speaking.

Behold, I dream of a cornelian pendant – and lo, it manifests due lustre in three-dimensions or 3-D. But, wait a moment, what can be the reason for this living lightning, glare or blinding flash?

It comes to surround me like sense-U-round cinema…"

TWENTY-NINTH SURAH>>>

Major Tree-bend: "Our radio communication is now ill at ease, or it refuses to respond in microwaves across the ether. Given this tergiversation or a refuge held in the glottalstop of Pinter's silences – we have no choice but to

venture forth and meet him ourselves. All secret-police units have to force this issue…

because none can allow Heraclitus Bean to escape with his

‘responsibilities’ unscathed. Haven’t we catapulted him outside into a cell or its unit of force (?); the like of which imprisons him within Horst Bienek’s novella… at least in terms of his frontal lobes. Requite me now, comrades: may it also be emblematic of Hubert Selby Junior’s decadent novel, The Room, as well as Lynne Reid-Bank’s beatnik inclusion, The L-Shaped Room?

Touché! For our team must examine his moral consciousness – or the lack of it – in person. (Even as we fling ourselves out of a 164

speeding aircraft in solitude – particularly when held aloft by parachutes and teeming towards the azure).”

Colonel Ax: “Thou hast been granted the affidavit of a murderous outdrop, my fellow officer! Indeed, he may not wish to whisper to one’s ghost in the machine, but now he’ll have to address his comptrollers rather than a Leyden jar. Furthermore, if we find ourselves dissatisfied with Heraclitus’ answers then we’ll feed his tongue to the birds… as in Daphne du Maurier’s story (do you recall it?) After all, wasn’t the ancient or pre-socratic sage – after whom he was named – devoured by hungry canines after expiring? Even here (then) lycanthropy finds itself outmanoeuvred by some pedigree chums.”

Scene-setting: A mere half-hour elapses by dint of the clock or its sun-dial, and the two militarists, Colonel Ax and Major Tree-bend, find themselves in their captives’ hut. The two psychiatrists who were responsible for his Exegesis lament (or its E-meter dianetics testing) are also present. They’re wearing green camouflage uniforms with brass buttons – as befits their soldierly rank. Their names have to be Whopper and Topper… of course. Heraclitus Bean, hoc loco, bends over a humble stove while preparing some food. It pops, boils, spits, flicks, bubbles, suppurates and crepitates in the shadowy truculence of this

‘cave’. All five of them shall remain together until our drama’s bitter end-point…

THIRTIETH SURAH>>>

More scene-setting: You should never forget that for artistic men the divine has to be female in its scope. Now then, a scenario of devastation rings the pit of Sabrina-Tara Tomkins’ lustre. For Kill-Martin – when chained to the Byzantine ornament of such beliefs – smoulders briefly upon a table. It can only be really all afire. A broken pitcher of wine – or some such happenstance –

lies slackly to one side of us. All around her a miracle of mayhem has suckled free to burn, with the silk or lintel at her 165

stage’s back being torn down amidships. Several of her guards lie devastated about the place – rather higgledy-piggledy – and the smell of acrid smoke rises in the dawn. Are these hostile temperatures, somewhat necessarily?

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins: “O my heart, what can have occurred?

An abandonment of this prism has led to a gyrating heat – the latter escaping from any possible witness. Never again: since I can flail my claws around like a triple-formed Goddess, but only to seep beneath the waves of my mask. I also claim the ancestral rights of maternal care! In any event, the evidence of Diana’s victims remains to curdle the blood; at least once they have been torn to pieces in pursuit of what’s indefinable. Listen to me: Astarte or Luna cleaves to an offerant by way of sacrifice – now to wound – again to grow – and always to inspire a love which is hatred. Odi et amo (it says): the axis around which Catallus revolved.

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Yet tell me, my care of Absalom, what portent this destruction averrs? Will a Spanish fresco shine on if laminated with acrylic paints? Why does the jester at your side, Mister Nobody, wax so pale? He resembles a thin-

blooded mortal; not at all one of those New Gods like us. ANSWER ME! Otherwise I shall tear you limb from garment… with my very own pincers."

Heraclitus Bean: "Fair enough – and what an assembly of indifference…! Vi et armis; once I knew how these pits had been constructed, I didn't swoon in vain… albeit with a sea of mud next to my shoulder-blades. Did I reach across so as to activate this torment circuit's module (?); only to find that the ooze had cleared, momentarily, or instant by instant. For the surreal circuitry of Kill-Martin was obviously re-mastering, so as to administer a potent dose of evolutionary change. Then the thought came upon me – without any aplomb – that radiation might be its next discharge… Do you partake of such romanticism as this? Since your doctrine of Galton's quicksand, 166

Sabrina-Tara, remains mistaken… primarily due to an absence of any dialectic whatsoever. By any reckoning, what comes to be acted upon – by way of these pits' servitude – merely responds with intrigue's ferocity. I jammed the tingling in my fingers into yonder circuitry (then) knowing that any radioactive conduit would respond to its source. It might embark before a sense of nothingness (yet again); because does the audience experience a frisson – amid its childish mien – when Punch and Judy appear on stage? Certainly, the little figurines bob before you inside a blur of puppetry and violence – or by reckoning upon a whizzing cadmium yellow. Yet here and now, this reverse power bursts across these cells or seeks out an outraged bounty… Suddenly I felt this transgression striking Kill-Martin, killing him, hammering into 'it' and slaying our trope (in turn). For, at a vast distance away, I heard him die to an accompaniment of orange; whilst he glowed malignantly and came festooned like Xolotl, the Aztec god. I listened to him perish. He shuddered out his wake amid the cry of a disabused Titan."

Sabrina-Tara Tomkins (with her neck-muscles convulsed in grief): "You wretched buffalo – at once unhallowed of all mischief! When attended by Nobody, you've slain Kill-Martin…

the vehicle who creates and destroys hitherto. I'm lost, left bereft, and vamped listless in the vantage of these days. Sabrina is ruined, hurt, and forced into a misalliance… Can I forget the robotic coda of Asimov's doxa? Am I to be forsaken and without spirit like Lamb's 'gin'? A ruined Medusa

always has the advantage of her night shift. Does one dare to peruse, if prior to such an off-take, Sheridan le Fanu’s Carmilla?”

Heraclitus Bean: “Forget it, my mistress of a deluded dominion… just look at your familiar, Kill-Martin, now. He lies on an escarpment beyond its flow and mist; or otherwise redundant about William Tucker’s discussion over morphology, The Language of Sculpture. Truly, he liberates the fluidity – in stone – of another Rodin. You see how he lies in yonder casket?

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For, even when small, separated worms can look like sea-serpents if cast on a giant video-screen. Here he stays… rather shorn, abandoned, lost, breathless to dust or a taxidermist’s skeleton (if minded to some pike). Do you register Ted Hughes’

stanzas about it?”

Scene-setting: Kill-Martin lies in a sarcophagus and appears to be jaundiced, or in a state of disrepair. Mister Nobody sucks his thumb and dribbles on regretfully. Whereas Heraclitus Bean later takes his leave on a pair of aero-discs. Sabrina-Tara Tomkins –

for her part – then shrivels up like a granite-faced prune… and thus one story ends.

THIRTY-FIRST SURAH>>>

Colonel Ax: “The very opposite of our peregrination or aims has come about, comrades. How may we configure it best?

Heraclitus Bean – our agent of more than a palsied year – why’s the alternative to what we wanted passed off? It refuses to please us in relation to an example set by Holbein’s Ambassadors (finished in 1553); or if sequenced before some green baize and foregrounded by a skull. It tilts away from us or comes sectioned by a morphic calm.”

Heraclitus Bean: “The future proves to be easily revealed by the riddles of the past… No Situationist text can really liberate its sense of quiet so forcibly (you see). We needn’t even speak of the fact that the latter was a splinter from late Surrealism, by way of Lettrism and the movement for an Imagist Bauhaus. Do you venture, Colonel, to clear the stirrup of such a solipsism so effectively? But first: let’s eat, drink and be superficially merry.

For all of it witnesses a Joker’s explanation; especially if it kindles against an ochre despatch or its display (now), and it finds itself set contrary to a purple backdrop. I’ll briefly tell ye, my masters…”

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Major Tree-bend: “Do so, slave, since our patience runs thin over the shifting sands of so much free-time. Certainly, no-one will escape from the grey powder that slips through a tunnel of such ill-graces. Might our mastication lighten the burden of these years?”

Whopper: “All this mental pumice renders your discourse opaque to our psychiatric jargon. In this instance, R.D. Laing’s twitch resembles nothing so much as a mesmerism – if held in reverse –

and coloured in opal. Truly, a Punch and Judy professor – when down on these contemporary beaches – has been taken to task for including Saddam Hussein and Osama-bin-Laden in his troupe.

Surely now, the one replaced Joey the Clown – in alter ego –

while the other made up for the Devil or Mephistopheles at our play’s end? It becomes a matter for fake sausages, brimstone and swazzle.”

Topper: <<<GASP!>>> “Yonder food is poisoned. It slipped down the gullet too easily or smoothly; and it’s just ravening about its source… while rumbling, intestinally, before its absence of fortitude. Do I grasp a mighty hand at the throat; if only to be reminded of a syrup of the Ages – at least in terms of its miniscule outcome? May one detect its passage through the gut (?); or rather like a grain of sand via the stomach?”

Heraclitus Bean (semi-hysterically): “No question of cosmic adulteration ever passes muster across a cook’s broth… quite definitely. Since no arsenic or potassium cyanide pushes out my envelope effectively; nor any old lace either. Truly, I don’t wish to adulterate (through repetition) the course of Thomas Wainwright, the poisoner. In no way: I merely wanted to drug you – so that you might remain as docile as lambs. See now, how your blue revolvers pass from your hands – the plenitude of which necessitates a calling out or a ‘branding’ of down-time.

Does one choose to throw oneself forward under the influence of 169

such pottage; thence to find yourself captured by Tom o’

Bedlam’s keep?”

Scene-setting: These listless spies were soon revived by their captor or former agent – and their bodies have been lashed to some chairs with rope. Each one of them sits in an orange glow –

while all of them stare at several raised yellow floorboards under which their missing pilots reside. Can it denote a surreal addendum to Edgar Allan Poe’s The Tell-Tale Heart? Moreover, might the voice of Sabrina-Tara Tomkins (from beyond the grave) give vent to those dripping stalactites now?

Heraclitus Bean – or is it Mister Nobody reincarnated (?): “Ho hum… Tom’s a warm. Do you esteemed comrades feel the draught of an enabling oven; together with its door which is open in order to release the heat? Necessarily so… when one considers what became of these X-men in their flying-machines. Certainly, these denizens of the sky don’t recall Captain W.E. Johns’

‘Biggles’ of the RFC – when coming out of the sun with his tommy-guns blazing. No way: for they lie here – if pregnant over an expectant feast – and beneath these very tumbril’s boards…

all of them happening to be every end up. Yes sir, they festoon the flooring of my enclosure – itself falsely traversed or drifting towards a debutante

issue under the wood. Surely, they had just banked down or moved across the slip-way of a knife; so as to assault the tram-line of our age… if not being presumably asleep?”

Major Tree-bend (who’s trussed up like the other captives):

“NO! NO! NO! He’s murdered them all. They were struck down without any pity whatsoever – if adrift of Edward Bond’s machine in Lear for the extraction of eye-balls. Was it to have been a retina’s continuum as we leapt over graves? We are undone, bankrupt, honey-mead, lissom or without livers…”

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Heraclitus Bean/Nobody’s spirit: “A matter of killing, my fine toy soldiers… NO! NO! NO!? I refuse to embark on a war –

whether through a looking-glass or aught else. Aren’t I an idiot (?); or a cretinous discharge via one’s deluded haze. In fact, how can I be held responsible for my actions (no matter how resultantly)? Anyway, the fame of a spastic always heralds an intrigue or its decay – primarily by way of a trumpet.

Furthermore, what number of these blow-hards were really necessary to discharge Jericho’s ambit? Forgive me not, but we are now in a world of reds and blacks.”

Colonel Ax <<<for the first time manifesting real fear>>>:

“Keep away, stay redundant, I discern a knife in your mitten which wasn’t meant for me!”

Heraclitus’ Nobody: “Sorry, I hear, see, sense and smell no evil whatsoever. I’m a buffoon who’s loaded up (now) for one too many trajectories before such a lobotomy. For nothing can succeed on my behalf save the after-effects of electro-convulsive therapy. Are you smitten by a giant wasp that eats one’s brain alive? Because even the art of the insane, such as at the Maudsley hospital in south London, cannot escape my torpedo’s ravages.

Why, in these circumstances, Albert Louden's obese ma'ams, Brian Willsher's Quasimodo lays, Billy Morey's virgin Bambi and John McQuirk's ghostly thumbs (sic) all flirt with some anti-freeze. As the commanding officer, you deserve to have your throat cut first. It's a matter of primus inter pares… Hee, hee, hee!"

(Scene-setting: He immediately stoops to sever an artery with a steaming blade. Colonel Ax's head then consequently hangs by a thread… in a situation where obscenity recalls the ritual of a disobliging cut).

Whopper, Topper and Tree-bend all mouth together a signal before their execution: "NNNNNNNNNOOOOOOOOO!!!

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We have succeeded in training agent Bean-o too well. He knows not what he fares by any redundancy such as this, comrades, and each doll waxes an indifferent solipsist before the other's fate.

Moreover, and in the memorialism of Robert Bloch, one psychopath fans the flames of his own paraffin-lamp. Didn't a mask by Ensor help to script Alfred Hitchcock's rushes – now that the word psycho has become a 'politically incorrect' term?"

+

"His elocution-in-madness had sprung from every trap or snare, and Heraclitus is now an idiot himself!"

Scene-setting: As their haemoglobin passes over his paw, Heraclitus Bean giggles to his mirror image or shadow – even though he's ever aware of its invisibility. Hee, hee, hee… how he enjoys this insane joke! He truly subsists within a cosmos of his own manufacture, and by these parameters, Mister Punch (H.J.

Eysenck) beats Miss Judy (Sigmund Freud) over the head with a wooden stick. After all of this, then, behavioural psychology seems to trump all such jokers with its ace of hearts. Hee, Hee, Hee… and yet hermit Heraclitus

must habitually resolve a contradiction by refuting its absence. He cannot help but be out of his box, and like Greta Garbo, loneliness takes no prisoners here… since his party tormentors had something to work on all along. Madness (in truth) remains hereditary, biological or generic – but a solitary can be tortured into insanity (particularly given an inner wound). Isn't Mister Bean no-body now? Can't he be characterised as a man alone? Hee, hee, hee…

FINAL CURTAIN